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BY

J O H N D A V I D S O N

AUTHOR OF

"PERFERVID," "SCARAMOUCHE IN NAXOS,"
"THE GREAT MEN," ETC.

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I.

PILGRIMSTOW MARKET, the name given by the dwellers in Pilgrimstow to a broad street, bent like a rib of beef, in which they do their shopping, springs unexpectedly out of the old crooked spine of the Enfield road into full modernity, and, after a busy curve of about a furlong, ends in a waste common as suddenly as it began.

All the country there to the north of London, between Highgate Wood and Tottenham Cross, and from Stoke Newington on to Bowes' Park and Palmer's Green, is pinched and pulled into knots and stitches of brand-new red brick and yellow. Waste lands and commons, stripes of trees, rows of old-fashioned villas, here and there a manor-house mellow with age,

or a hoary farmstead, and bits of antique villages that seem to have strayed from far inland, show what the wholesome countryside was like before the speculative fever and ague seized it and blotched it with shoddy. But hardly a dozen inhabitants in the entire district remember Junes when hay-fields scented the air where mounds of clay burn now, or those long quiet summers, the weeks of which were marked off by a gay beanfeast, hailing from Islington or Somers Town, and held on the innocent sites of future railway stations. It is not that the natives have died out. No. They are driven away, helpless and horror-struck, into workhouses, into almshouses, into space—a few, more fortunate, into their graves. Two or three of the oldest of them, dreadfully out of place, still sun themselves at corners, their outraged ideas of what ought to be in Pilgrimstow and the universe glancing reproachfully from their faces and clothes: human *bric-à-brac*, they look among the new men as

knee-breeches and ruffles might look in a slop-shop.

In a very short time a village can be pulled down, a manor cut into squares, and filled with little cupboards of houses and ten thousand people. For eighteen months or so the new estate is very trim and neat—a small patch of green behind, a smaller patch before each dwelling. Gradually the green wears away, children overrun every street, slatterns appear at gates, arms akimbo; men in slippers down at heel and torn coats are seen all the evening going for beer in cracked jugs; the spruce lodger leaves, and two, sometimes three, families crowd into each tiny house. A mile, half a mile further on, or to the right, or to the left, another village has been pulled down, another manor cut into squares and lozenges, and built over; and all the better-to-do people have migrated thither. That is how the country is being eaten up: a new order of slums is rapidly girdling London.

Were you to look you would not find Pilgrimstow Market in the buff-covered directory for Pilgrimstow, Warrenpark, etc. The street has a name, and the buildings on either side are "terraced" and "placed," in the aspiring suburban manner. It is the people of Pilgrimstow who have christened their main thoroughfare, Pilgrimstow Market: the principal shops are there, and on Saturday nights chapmen from all the ends of London resort thither with their wares. Butchers, who sell quarter a sheep for three shillings, vendors of sweet-stuff, of earthenware, of ironmongery, set up their stalls on the pavements and in the roadway. Cheapjacks stay their nondescript vehicles at the corners of streets, and take their own breath away with miraculous bargains in umbrellas, pocket knives, canaries, and oil-cloth. Costermongers, with Whitechapel carts, go up and down offering armfuls of vegetables for a penny, and shrimp-sellers come with boats on wheels and get rid at

a halfpenny the pint of very brown and strong - smelling cargoes : on Saturday nights the suburban palate seems to become quite bigoted in its tolerance.

The only remnant of old times in the market is the "Rose and Crown," one of the survivals of the many inns that once bore that charming name in and about London. Partly of wood and partly of yellow brick, it sits on a little eminence well back from the street. Its incongruity with its surroundings is not very marked ; a few tall lime trees on one side, and a large tea-garden with nymphs and fauns in stucco, and lime trees again, on the other, preserve the "Rose and Crown" from rubbing shoulders with the impudent cockney red-brick terraces, and give it a setting, deprived of which it might look very forlorn and ill at ease. Two or three gables, a long chimney, a slope of deep thatch on the oldest part, and some low, broad, bulging windows, are its picturesque features. On a bright summer evening, perhaps the

creepers are missed that once hid its sharper angles, and relieved its somewhat dull tone; but as a rule there is such a going and coming all day long of dog-carts and drays, of commercial travellers in top-hats and navvies in caps and slouched felts, that a genial spectator loses all feeling except a human sense of solace in the cheery vulgar bustle.

It was about half-past seven o'clock on a Saturday evening in June, that a hansom from London, not a common appearance in Pilgrimstow, pulled up in front of the Rose and Crown. A tall man stepped out, and entered the inn by one of its four doors. He seemed to know what he was about, for he shut the door behind him and sat down on a cushioned bench without ringing the hand-bell or making any direct appeal to be served. There was nobody but himself at the private bar he had chosen—either before or behind it. He took a cigarette from a large gold case which he carried in one of his trousers pockets, lit it, and

smoked slowly. All his actions were leisurely and graceful. The laughter and loud talk of men and women filled the other compartments of the inn. Shrill cries of babies in arms, and the complaints of weariedness and requests for biscuits of children, many of whom had not long found their feet, mingled with adult demands for drops of gin, pots of four 'alf and twos of Irish cold. The cigarette-smoker listened for a second or two with an expression of childish wonder on his large handsome face. Then he noticed the mirror hanging above the fireplace. He went to it, took off his hat, and ran his fingers through his copper-coloured hair, which was longer than the fashion and divided in the middle. He donned his hat again, adjusting it carefully with a slight tilt forward, and a slighter inclination to one side. Having stared himself complacently in the face he turned his side to the mirror and tried to get a glimpse of his shoulders. Then he fastened the bottom

button of his frock coat, which he had undone to get at his cigarette-case, and resumed his seat. At that moment the landlady who attended in person to the private bar, entered from the interior of the inn.

“Goodness and mercy!” exclaimed the landlady, holding up her plump hands.

“Ah! Mrs. Tiplady,” said the tall customer without rising. “How well you are looking! I hope you are very well.”

“How do you do, Master Baptist? I am very well indeed, thank you,” said Mrs. Tiplady, who had a muscular mouth and a precise utterance. “How you do surprise me! And what can I do for you, Master Baptist?” she added, spreading her plump arms on the bar as a cushion for her portly bosom. She stuck a match between her teeth, and closed her lips, nibbling the end. Her good-looking, broad face glowed round her tight mouth like a rosy apple round its stalk, and her small restless eyes overlooked her cheek bones, pretty much as the

serpent's green orbs may have peered across the apple it held out in its expanded mouth to the mother of mankind.

"You can give me a little of your wonderful brandy, and the key of the door," said Mrs. Tiplady's tall customer.

Mrs. Tiplady took a key from a bunch hanging at her side, and handed it across the bar. Her tall customer, or rather visitor, rising from his seat, took the key, and locked the door by which he had entered. From a cupboard Mrs. Tiplady then brought forth a flat bottle and poured a liberal quantity of its contents into a tumbler.

"Water, or soda?" she asked.

"Water," replied the tall man. "Water from the New River. I crossed the New River on my way, Mrs. Tiplady. The sight of it always fills me with astonishment. It is one breadth all along, its banks are plain—you could not tell the one from the other; and its course is unbroken. When I make a river, Mrs. Tiplady, I shall have water-

falls and cascades, boscage now on one bank, now on the other, with rocks and ruins, and I shall have otters and salmon in it. What a noble opportunity the New River Company are daily losing! They might make an enchanting stream, the delight of millions of men and women, the resort of lovers, the most wonderful promenade in the world. Finsbury Park should then resound with the baying of otter hounds, and the lights of the salmon-leisterers gleam on the back gardens of Hornsey and Wood Green."

"Salmon need the sea, Master Baptist," muttered Mrs. Tiplady.

"Let them have whatever they need. Miles of river that might be made anything of, and it is left a mere aqueduct with iron bridges, where boys and nursemaids watch the dace and roach feeding against the sluggish flow of the brown waters."

The tall man shrugged his broad shoulders, sighed gently, and drank a little of the brandy and water. His voice was

soft and musical, richer and stronger than a woman's, but with a sweetness and tenderness rarely to be heard from a man. He spoke deliberately; every word fell from his lips as if loaded with meaning, and the import of what he said was much enhanced by an impressive use of his glossy brown eyes.

"Well, sir, sense or nonsense, you always do talk lovely, Master Baptist," said Mrs. Tiplady, letting the match fall from between her teeth.

"Ah! Mrs. Tiplady," rejoined the tall man, "there is no such thing as nonsense. The whole world is an embodiment of sense, of common-sense. The most extravagant actions and the wildest ideas are therefore quite sensible, because the world is sense, and because a part is equal to the whole. I need five hundred, Mrs. Tiplady."

They spoke in whispers now, the tall man having laid his elbows on the bar opposite Mrs. Tiplady.

“Why not take two hundred, Master Baptist? a part of the whole,” suggested Mrs. Tiplady maliciously.

“Nonsense, Mrs. Tiplady ; I thought you were a woman of the world, which you cannot be—indeed, you cannot exist at all if you talk nonsense, the world and all that is therein being sense, as I told you already. To talk nonsense is self-annihilation. Five hundred pounds, and I should like them now.”

“But why didn’t you write me, Master Baptist?”

“It was impossible. I intended writing you to-night, but two hours ago I lent the last ten pounds I had to a very dear fellow, and so had to come out here. I omitted even to save sixpence for a telegram.”

“Why didn’t you borrow one?”

“My dear Mrs. Tiplady, you know that I never borrow. It is the only rule of conduct I have prescribed myself, never to borrow. Always have money for yourself and ten pounds for a friend, and never

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borrow. If a man does that, he may go into any society, and marry any heiress."

"Then why don't you marry an heiress, Master Baptist?"

"Ah! that is not to be done lightly, Mrs. Tiplady. Meantime, the five hundred pounds."

"It's not a month since you had three hundred, Master Baptist, and your father said then he wouldn't give another sovereign to buy your body from a cats'-meat man."

"No! but do cats'-meat men do that, Mrs. Tiplady?"

"What else turned my cat from his penn'orth yesterday? You may say the skewer was dirty or the meat was high; but I say it wasn't horseflesh."

"Now, what ground have you for thinking that it wasn't horseflesh?"

As he asked this, the tall man stretched himself and took a meditative turn across the floor. He was evidently in no special hurry, and just as interested in the subject

of cats'-meat as in that of his errand to the "Rose and Crown."

"What makes me think it wasn't horse-flesh? Common sense, Master Baptist," replied Mrs. Tiplady fearlessly. "If pork-butchers make sausages out of cats for men and women to eat, it stands to reason that cats'-meat men fill skewers with human——"

"Hush, Mrs. Tiplady! Your imagination is corrupt. Give me a light."

Mrs. Tiplady's visitor drank some more of the brandy and water, and lit another cigarette. But Mrs. Tiplady was not to be put down.

"And who corrupted my imagination?" she said. "Everybody that comes near you tries to imitate you, Master Baptist. Goodness and Mercy! Don't I remember when I first saw the trick of your speeches. You weren't hardly seventeen, but you were as tall as you are now, and home at Easter in your father's house here in Pilgrimstow. I was in the kitchen writing

to Tiplady—it must have been after eleven and everybody ought to have been in bed—and you came prowling round for something to eat. I took a broom to put you out, for Tiplady's last letter hadn't been as passionate as I required, and I was trying to work him round, when you up and says in your soft way, that's none so soft neither, how you wanted a jam-tart, and if there wasn't any I was to set to and make one there and then, and me as white with anger as a linen heifer."

"Ephod, Mrs. Tiplady. You don't usually make mistakes of that kind."

"I always calls it heifer. Well, I did give you such a stare, and I said when I got my breath, just as if I was a man, 'you be damned.' But you says, 'Piper my dear——' "

"Piper ; yes. I had quite forgotten your maiden name."

"'Piper, my dear,' says you, 'did you ever make a jam-tart at midnight before?' 'No,' says I, 'never ! nor any

other cook.' 'Then,' says you, 'here's a chance for you to do what has never been done.' And I saw it, I saw the notion of it, and set to and made a fire and a jam-tart, which I remember from that very night I understood how to turn things upside down, and change about sense and nonsense."

"How very enchanting! To do what has never been done, and to say what has never been said, is the whole duty of man. Hence there is very little duty left for man to do."

"Yes, Master Baptist; and it's so easy. You just say what isn't the case, and that's wit. Sometimes I get out of it, though, since Tiplady died. He was so puzzled; it did my heart good to see him scratch his head for half an hour when I told him there was plenty of rum in his tumbler, although not a drop of it was anything but water. Barmaids and ostlers won't think, and it don't pay to try it on customers. But it comes to me when I want it."

“I should like the five hundred in an hour’s time, Mrs. Tiplady.”

“It can’t be done ; not in two hours.”

“In two hours, Mrs. Tiplady. You’ll manage it in two. That being so, you might tell your man to look after my hansom.”

“Yes, sir. It may take me two hours and a half.”

“Not more than two, Mrs. Tiplady, it mustn’t take you more than two. And remember my hansom, and give me one of your wonderful cigars.”

“You always did have so many wants, Master Baptist,” said Mrs. Tiplady good-humouredly, as she brought out a cigar-box from the same cupboard that had yielded the flat brandy-bottle.

“At what price do you sell these cigars, Mrs. Tiplady ?”

“Are you going to buy any ?”

“I would never think of such a thing. It was merely out of curiosity. Do you sell them at sixpence, for example ?”

“That’s the best cigar I keep, and I sell it at fourpence, commonly ; but if a young fool from London wants to pay sixpence, I take it. Nobody ever said they weren’t worth sixpence.”

“They’re worth more, Mrs. Tiplady, in Piccadilly. They cost a shilling there. What a profit those West-end tobacconists must make.”

“But look at their rents !”

“Ah, yes, to be sure.”

“Don’t you go talking about the price of them cigars, mind.”

Mrs. Tiplady seemed a little uneasy.

“My dear Mrs. Tiplady !”

“Mind you don’t, Master Baptist.”

“Will you go for that money now ? I shall be here at half-past nine. I want as much of it as possible in notes and gold, remember.”

“Don’t expect me so soon, and don’t expect five hundred,” said Mrs. Tiplady, as she retired into the interior of the inn.

The tall man finished his brandy and

water, lit his cigar, and resumed his seat on the cushioned bench. He leaned both hands on the gold head of his malacca cane, and listened again to the noise of the inn. Alone in the private compartment, occupying a little portion of space all to himself, with that quarrelling and laughing and Babel of cries going on at his ear, the tall man felt like a divinity overhearing for the first time the mean strife of an inferior race. He was thirty years of age, and had heard such clamour often before, but it always had the same significance for him, and he wondered at it, as he wondered at everything that impressed him. After listening for about five minutes, he rose, smiling pensively, and having a second time run his fingers through his hair in front of the looking-glass, he readjusted his hat as before to a nicety, and went out, locking the door behind him.

The market was in full swing, and delight beamed from the face of the tall man as he watched the good-humoured

crowd, rocking from side to side of the broad street. The peculiar serpentine motion of the human mass struck him at once. Careless of the inn-door loafers staring at him and whispering, he stood still to consider the cause of the lurch and roll of the market. On one side of the street were the butchers, greengrocers, and provision merchants; on the other, the haberdashers, drapers, and bootmakers. Both pavements were edged with the stall holders, and the costermongers and sellers of penny articles moved up and down in the roadway. There seemed to be no order among the buyers, and yet a certain form was unwittingly followed. Two intermixed streams of people filled the street from side to side, eddying round the shops and stalls, and pressing and pushing, with laughter and exclamations; but there were also cross-currents from either side, and it was these that gave the sagging motion to the crowd. In the middle of the street people thronged across at right angles; receding

towards either end they took a more oblique course, and in fewer numbers passed from the haberdasher to the grocer, from the butcher to the bootmaker. Like an oblong whirlpool the market streamed and spun in its narrow strait. When the tall man perceived how the surging motion was caused, he fancied a whirlpool too; but a shade of annoyance crossed his face as he remembered how often the simile had been applied to crowds.

“Ah!” he thought, recovering from his disappointment, “it is like quicksilver in a narrow porcelain trough; every atom moving, shuddering, and yet the whole at rest.”

Slowly he moved down from the front of the inn into the crowd. Perfectly dressed, with his gold-headed cane and graceful walk, he was much looked at. His height—a little over six feet—and the impressive style of the man, overawed those among the younger generation who were disposed to jeer; his handsome face, dark eyes, and

charming smile attracted the women, and even conciliated the hard-featured fathers of families, who, at first, felt inclined to jostle him and tramp on his toes. Way was made for him ; women got the wheels of their perambulators interlocked in their hurry to clear the pavement, and at least one sweet-stuff stall was upset by the sudden heaving back of a wave of the crowd to let him pass. The tall man enjoyed himself heartily. He seemed to be but little of a connoisseur in admiration ; it was all exhilarating : beer that frothed in pewter pots, or champagne quivering in glasses like film, were equally agreeable, one would have said, to his thirst for admiration, his desire to be liked, to be adored.

“Buy, buy, buy!” cried the butchers, whetting their knives ; “who buys ?” “I’ve got lovely butter,” said the provision merchants at the top of their voices. “Eggs, ten a shilling, a shilling for ten !” ; “Cresses, three bunches a penny !” ;

“Shrimps, fresh shrimps, ’apenny a pint!”; “Best mohair laces, four a penny, a penny for four!”; and other cries of shopmen, and of itinerant vendors, and the shouts of cheapjacks, rose shrill or hoarse above the general hubbub like the voices of men in a storm at sea. But the tall man was so healthy, so rapt in self-appreciation, that these discordant noises disturbed him not at all. Some of his acquaintances were in the habit of saying that he had no nerves; others, no conscience. They should rather have said that his nerves were of steel, and his conscience absolutely under control.

By the time he had got to one end of the market, the tall man had become a subject of general conversation. As his face was clean-shaven, some set him down for an actor; for the same reason others said he was a Member of Parliament, or the new candidate for the Pilgrimstow division of Middlesex. Nobody seemed to have seen him before.

“Wonder if ’e ’ails from these parts?”

said a working-man who carried a big carpet-bag, bursting with meat, cabbages, and bread. His wife, to whom his remark was addressed, pushed before her a perambulator, overloaded with onions, cresses, kippered herrings, and two babies, one sucking a bottle, and the other asleep. This worthy couple had finished their marketing, and as their progress homewards was necessarily slow, they had nothing left to do but to speculate on this strange apparition of a very tall, good-looking man, fashionably dressed, lounging in a Saturday-night market crowd.

“’E’s a masher an’ no mistake,” said the man’s wife.

“Tell you wot, Sal,” cried the man, slapping his thigh as heartily as he could in the crowd. “Bless’d if he ain’t a livin’ dummy! ’E’s a tailor’s advertisement, that’s wot ’e is. See if he don’t walk up and down ’ere every night for a week. Then some bloomin’ snip from ’O’burn or the Strand ’ll open shop, an’ this yer’ll stick

hissself at the door as a sample of hour first-class twenty - three - an' - a - tanner superfine suit made to order best wear for workin' men, with a pair o' braces an' a cell-you-loid collar thrown in, s'elp me! An' 'and out the bills. An' the workin' man as buys 'll be sold. Cell-you-loid! Sell-you-one-up-t'other-down. You mind me, Sal!"

The man's wife laughed jocosely, and gave her husband an approving nudge with her elbow as the crowd squeezed them together.

"You've got his measure, Bill," she said.

"No, 'e 'aven't."

"Eh!" exclaimed the man, whom his admiring spouse called Bill, turning round ready to pulverise the rash mortal who had dared to interfere in a confidential talk between husband and wife.

"Why, Bill, it's old Nixey!" said the woman.

"Well, I'm blowed!" cried Bill, stretching out a stout arm and pulling towards him an old man who was already a full

pace behind them, although he had been close to Bill's elbow when he uttered his contradiction, so dense was the crowd, and the old man so ill able to make way through it.

"Well, old Nixey, you're a bloomin' in'abitant, that's wot you are," cried Bill. "'Ow did yer manage to crawl 'ere? I ain't seen yer in the market since Michael-mas. Wife has a bit 'o 'baccy for yer, ye bloomin' old in'abitant. An' wot d'yer know about this yer walkin' gent? 'Ere, give's yer arm. Why, old Nixey, boy, 'ere's good old staminar left yet! 'An so 'e ain't no tailor's block, ain't 'e?"

The inhabitant, as Bill called him, a tottering old man of over seventy, leant heavily on the arm proffered him, and, having recovered his breath after a fit of coughing, said, in reply to Bill's question, "No, 'e's a gentleman. I know 'im. Twenty years ago, when this wery market were a grass park, I've 'elped 'im fly 'is kite just where we're a-walking now, an' bowled

to 'im all an afternoon, though I were a bit stiff even then."

"By jingo! Who in sulphur is 'e?"

"'E's Baptist Lake, the son of old Sir 'Arry Lake."

"'Im as lives in the 'all yonder, an' owns Pilgrimstow?"

"Ay, an' there's nary one I dessay in the 'ole market knows 'im, but me—an' Jane Piper—Mrs. Tiplady. She were cook at Garland 'All when Baptist were a lad."

"I've 'eerd he don't pull with 'is father. An' I say, they do tell as 'ow he makes things hum, eh? up in London?"

"I've 'eerd so."

"Well, 'e's a fine figger," said Sal, watching the tall man with renewed interest.

"Won't yer speak to 'im?" asked Bill of his old friend. "'E'll be good for a bob, surelee."

"No; I once spoke to 'im five year ago at the door of the 'Rose and Crown,' an' he said to me, smilin' beautiful, 'You don't

interest me, you're not pict'resk,' an' a lot more, but I mind them words; and 'e said 'em as if 'e was blessin' me, an' I thanks 'im like a fool, he have such a way with 'im. But I'll never speak to 'im again."

"Well, of all—Strike me! Wot a blasted file!"

"He do smile beautiful," said Sal.

II.

TEN minutes after the departure of her visitor, Mrs. Tiplady left the "Rose and Crown." She traversed a red-brick labyrinth of raw-looking streets lying to the east of the market, and came out on the Enfield Road almost opposite a large wrought-iron gate, on either side of which a high wall extended for several hundred yards. This wall was overlooked by a variety of trees, conspicuously by some old hollies, lilacs and laburnums. Except for a few rusty bunches on the topmost boughs, the bloom had gone from the lilacs, but the laburnums were still able to make a lavish display with the wealth they spend so prodigally every summer.

Mrs. Tiplady pushed open the iron gate, and was immediately intercepted by a middle-aged woman, who rose from a stool

in the doorway of a rather dilapidated lodge.

“Who do you want?” asked the lodge-keeper sharply, adjusting her spectacles; but before Mrs. Tiplady could reply, the lodge-keeper had recognized her. “Oh!” she exclaimed, and turning abruptly on her heel she went indoors.

Mrs. Tiplady without making any remark walked rapidly up the short avenue of chestnuts and elms, and soon arrived before a large, square house. This was Garland Hall, a many-windowed, capacious mansion of no architectural pretensions.

Indeed nothing about Garland Hall corresponded to its pretty name, unless the ivy which covered its whole front may be taken into account. The name, however, had been given to the house, while it was yet as innocent of ivy as of every other grace, by the man who had caused it to be built, none other than the founder of the fortune of the Lakes. The ivy may therefore be looked on as one of those after-

thoughts by which Time tries to reconcile the many unfortunate opposites that are still perseveringly coupled by chance or man's inadvertence. By his marriage with Berinthia Myddleton, great-grand-daughter of Sir Hugh Myddleton, the enterprising engineer of the New River, the first Baptist Lake came into possession of three shares in the New River Company. Ten years after his marriage, the accession of Dutch William having brought with it a greater feeling of security than had been known in England for half a century, and the New River stock having increased in value a hundredfold, Baptist Lake, first of the name, sold his wife's shares and bought with the produce the lands of Pilgrimstow Priory, lying dispersedly between Highgate Wood and Tottenham. The fringes and outlying portions of this estate he retailed in a year or two, with much profit to himself, and then settled down to a solid, comfortable, country existence, for the full realisation of which he built himself Garland Hall on the

site of an old Grange that had been burned down during the Civil War.

In the course of generations the wealth of the Lakes was much increased by the sale of leases and freeholds, and by judicious investments, but it was not until the reign of George IV., of dubious memory, that any of the family attempted public life. Godfrey Lake, in the last days of the Regency, suddenly evinced an interest in matters unconnected or connected only remotely and contingently, with his own prosperity. He began to take a leading part in local affairs, and became a Justice of the Peace. Then he was appointed Deputy-Lieutenant, and shortly after his grateful county sent him to Parliament. Having consistently supported the proper party, he was made a baronet on the accession of William IV. When Victoria came to the throne, Sir Godfrey, finding his powers failing, withdrew from Westminster and the management of the affairs of the nation, and spent his last years at Pilgrim-

stow in the peaceful enjoyment of what he believed to be well-earned repose : it is said that to go to sleep in the House of Commons after dinner three or four times a week for half-a-dozen years, is still considered by florid old gentlemen no inadequate service to the state.

In Sir Godfrey the Lake stock seemed to have put forth its finest blossom. The wealth of the family steadily accumulated while the family itself as steadily decayed, until, in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the sole representative of the Pilgrimstow Lakes were Sir Henry and his son, Baptist. With the latter, the quidnuncs at one time expected that the family name would be restored to the honoured repute it had enjoyed in the days of Sir Godfrey ; but up to the time when our story opens, Baptist had entirely disappointed them.

One other Lake must be mentioned before we follow Mrs. Tiplady. It was Sir Baptist Lake, son of Sir Godfrey, who built

the high wall enclosing about thirty acres of woodland round Garland Hall. Already in his time that canker of the land, suburban London, had approached uncomfortably near the domain of the Lakes. Lady Octavia Lake, Sir Baptist's dame, was strong for a house in Kensington, but Sir Baptist, after much slow cogitation, determined to remain at the old place. Lady Octavia grumbled sorely and long, and nothing could pacify her until her husband built his great wall. The seclusion it afforded set the lady's mind at rest; but it is said she died shortly after the wall was finished, for want of some permanent anxiety to keep her phlegmatic temperament from stagnating.

Mrs. Tiplady climbed the flight of broad steps and knocked vigorously at the oaken door of Garland Hall. It was opened at once a few inches, and the eyes and nose of an old man peered out into the waning light.

"What do you want?" a cracked voice

asked. Then the old face vanished quickly with a strange grimace, and the door was thrown wide open. Mrs. Tiplady went in and closed the door behind her. As she crossed the hall, she caught sight of the old man who had acted as footman shuffling along a lobby which led to the servants' quarters. Nobody came to receive her, but that produced no hesitation in her movements. Ascending the low-stepped staircase as far as the second floor, she paused to regain her breath, and perhaps to let her anger cool. It may have been only the rapid walk and the stairs, but anger at the scant courtesy she had received, and yet seemed to be accustomed to, from the servants of Sir Henry Lake, would help to account for the deeper crimson that dyed her rosy cheeks. Having tapped with the points of her fingers on one of the doors on the landing, and without waiting for a reply from within, Mrs. Tiplady entered a large front room and went directly to its only occupant.

The apartment which Mrs. Tiplady entered with so little ceremony was liker a show-room of old furniture than a place for dwelling in. From the earliest times the front room on the second floor had been the study of the master of the house. Changes in the furnishing of Garland Hall in obedience to the mode, or according to the whim of a new mistress, had gradually filled the study with old pieces in too good a condition to be stowed away as lumber, and too dear to the heart of a Lake to be sent to the auctioneer. To describe the room in detail would be to write a catalogue extending to several pages ; it will be quite sufficient to indicate its principal contents. One side was almost filled by a book-case of Ince's designing ; it looked like the front of a garden pavilion, with globes and laurels carved on the tops of the divisions, and garlands looped under what we may call the eaves. Opposite the book-case was a Flemish buffet of the sixteenth century, designed by de Vriese,

said to have been an heirloom in the Lake family long before the time of the first Baptist. On the third side, between the windows, stood a massive oaken cupboard of Elizabeth's time, age-blackened, with griffins and draped busts. This had been part of the plenishing of the first dame Lake, and was believed to have belonged originally to Sir Hugh Myddleton. Some heavy, ornate chairs of William III.'s time, and two Sheratons with round bottoms like great cheeses, with endless ornament on their spindle-legs, uncomfortable-looking arms and slim backs, were noticeable among nearly two dozen seats scattered about the floor. Cupboards and console-tables filled all the wall space unoccupied by the larger pieces of furniture already mentioned, and several card-tables were set among the chairs. Although the room looked crowded, it was so large that there was plenty of space to move about in. The fireplace was hidden by a plain writing-table of Heppelwhite's design ;

above it hung a painting which from its appearance might have been a life-size portrait ; its face, however, was turned to the wall. Both windows were open, but a musty odour of old leather and old wood, not altogether disagreeable, overcame the fresh evening air.

Sir Henry Lake—it was he whom Mrs. Tiplady had come to see—sitting in a plain office chair at the Heppelwhite table, held out a slack but cordial hand to his former cook, and with a glance more anxious than surprised motioned her to be seated. A book lay on the table beside him, closed upon his spectacles, evidently inserted to mark the place where he had left off reading when the knock came to the door, or probably when the light began to fail. It was too dark to see Sir Henry distinctly. He fingered his left ear, and shuffled his feet a little while Mrs. Tiplady was getting seated.

“Again, and so soon,” he said, sighing heavily.

“Alas, Sir Henry,” said Mrs. Tiplady

BAPTIST LAKE.

with a perfect assumption of candour and deep sympathy, "my heart bleeds for you."

The language was commonplace, but Mrs. Tiplady's warmth of tone made up for that. She spoke very carefully.

"He shall have what he wants as long as he keeps out of my sight," said Sir Henry.

"But it is so cruel of him! A man as cannot—which cannot make three thousand a year do, an' comes beggin' from his old father every month!—It's not to be borne; I feel as if I would shake to pieces with anger at the very thought of it."

"You were always a good soul, Mrs. Tiplady."

"It's a prodigal's outrage, Sir Henry, an' your honour should cut him off with a shilling."

"He shall have what he wants while I live, if he will only keep out of my sight. How much?"

"A thousand pounds, Sir Henry," replied Mrs. Tiplady with bated breath.

"He never asked so much before," said

Sir Henry meditatively, as he opened a drawer in his writing-table, and took out a cheque-book.

Mrs. Tiplady, who had removed her gloves, rose and lit a reading-lamp that stood ready. She then remained beside Sir Henry while he filled up an order for a thousand pounds, payable to Mrs. Jane Tiplady. When he had finished, he rose and handed her the pen. Mrs. Tiplady took the chair in which he had been sitting, and wrote a receipt. Without even glancing at Mrs. Tiplady's signature, Sir Henry placed the receipt in the drawer along with his cheque-book, and the pair resumed the chairs they had occupied at the beginning of the interview.

"I had better go, sir," said Mrs. Tiplady after a pause.

"There's no hurry, Mrs. Tiplady. Although you post a cheque to-night, it can't be delivered till Monday morning."

"But I'm not going to post it. He's waiting at the 'Rose and Crown.'"

“He’s in Pilgrimstow again!” exclaimed Sir Henry. “I wish he wouldn’t come to Pilgrimstow. Why does he do it? I wish he would go away—to Australia.”

“I’ll tell him never to come to Pilgrimstow any more,” said Mrs. Tiplady, pulling on her gloves.

“Do, Mrs. Tiplady,” rejoined Sir Henry with unusual energy. “Make him stay away—frighten him away. Keep him out of my life. If I could forget him!”

“I’ll engage you’ll never hear of him in Pilgrimstow again, sir.”

“Thank you, Mrs. Tiplady; you are a great comfort to me.”

“Oh, sir, I would do anything for you!”

Sir Henry muttered an acknowledgment, and then Mrs. Tiplady rose and said now she must go; it was Saturday night, and her business required her presence.

“Saturday night!” exclaimed Sir Henry. “He can’t have cash till Monday, then.”

“Oh, perhaps, sir, I can manage to lend him a little till then,” said Mrs. Tiplady.

“I won’t hear of it, Mrs. Tiplady.”

He counted out ten sovereigns from an old-fashioned silk purse, and handed them to the landlady of the “Rose and Crown.”

“Give him that,” he said, “to go on with. Let him have no excuse to come to me.”

“How good you are, sir! It is a burning black shame!”

“Dear Mrs. Tiplady,” said Sir Henry, “you are a great comfort to me; you always have been. Is there anything—can I give—can I help—?”—he hesitated and stuck.

“Oh, Sir Henry! Please, Sir Henry!” cried Mrs. Tiplady, sorely distressed. “Never think of such a thing. My duty, my affection, if I may dare to say it, is yours to command, sir. Please, sir, never ’int at payment. I would do anything for the best master and the kindest gentleman as ever breathed. I wish you a good night, sir.”

“It consoles me,” said Sir Henry, ignoring

her salutation, "to think of you sometimes—often. Had it not been for you, Mrs. Tiplady, I should have been dead long ago; shame and misery would have destroyed me. When I remember that no one but you knows the—knows of it, I say it consoles me, and makes me willing to live. We all love life, Mrs. Tiplady, don't we?"

"Yes, sir; we all loves it. Some loves money, and some loves drink, dreadful; but life—everybody loves it, cruel, cruel."

"Ay, and there's another kind of love," said Sir Henry slowly.

Mrs. Tiplady went over in her mind—money, drink, life?

"Oh!" she exclaimed, suddenly, as she thought, understanding what Sir Henry meant, "there's a mother's love, sir, and another's love, sir. My poor, dear Tiplady!"

"Yes—yes," said Sir Henry; "but I meant something else."

Mrs. Tiplady was puzzled; so she coughed. It couldn't be God's love, she said to herself, for Sir Henry wasn't a

religious man ; and as for—well, if that was what he intended ! She shrugged her shoulders. It wouldn't be her as would let on she understood. If Sir Henry wanted to talk of divorces and such like, he must speak plainer.

“ I was thinking,” said Sir Henry, “ of the self-sacrificing love that would lay down life for another.”

“ Yes, sir,” said Mrs. Tiplady, with a slight start, but still sympathetically. “ I must be goin', Sir Henry, if you please.”

“ Don't go yet, Mrs. Tiplady. Sit down a little. I like you to sit beside me. I wish you would come oftener—not too often ; once or twice a week. As I grow older I cannot quite remember sometimes that the whole world does not know, but only you and me. If you were to come oftener, it would keep the thought of you more firmly in my mind.”

“ Yes, sir,” said Mrs. Tiplady ; “ I'll come oftener.”

“ Thank you, Mrs. Tiplady. You are so

kind and honest. It's a pleasure to have you in the room. But you're not sitting, Mrs. Tiplady."

Mrs. Tiplady sat down on the edge of her chair, and Sir Henry leaned towards her with his elbows on his knees.

"Only you and I know it, Mrs. Tiplady," he whispered. "Only you and I. Not even the lawyers are in the secret, and the bankers don't know it. We trick them, Mrs. Tiplady." He rubbed his hands, and laughed feebly—a laugh that was liker a sob than a chuckle.

Mrs. Tiplady coughed, and looked at three large moths that had come in from the night, and were beating their lives out against the opal shade of the lamp. Sir Henry followed her gaze, and watched the moths for a moment or two in silence. Something in his profile struck Mrs. Tiplady. There was dignity, loyalty in the finely-shaped brow; the nose, a little too retroussé for male comeliness, indicated, with its open, quivering nostril, simplicity

verging on folly, and bravery — Polish bravery, that rushes open-eyed against adamant and over precipices. It can hardly have been these features that interested Mrs. Tiplady, for she said to herself, “The stupid old fool!” She must have been regarding chiefly Sir Henry’s large pale-blue eye, his scanty beard, receding chin and feeble mouth, that would not keep shut.

“If you please, sir,” she said when he turned towards her again, “I must really go now.”

“Ay,” he said rising, and accompanying her to the door, “you had better go now. You have comforted me, Mrs. Tiplady. Come soon. Good-night.”

Alone again in his room Sir Henry seated himself in one of the long-backed, heavily ornamented William III. chairs, and watched the moths beating against the lamp. He pitied them, he wanted to save them; but, as much fascinated by their action as they were by the light, he sat and

suffered—suffered acutely. Other moths joined the three that had first been drawn to the lamp, and a flight of gnats came in and buzzed about the globe, and pinged against the ceiling quite audibly. After a time the soft whirr of the moths, the hum of the gnats, and the rustle of the ivy-leaves at the open windows began to soothe him: he was sound asleep when the old man-servant brought him his supper.

III.

BAPTIST LAKE was enchanted with Pilgrimstow Market for fully half an hour, so ingenuous, so hearty and human seemed to him the boisterous crowd of purchasers, laying in supplies of beef and mutton and bacon, and fish and loaves and vegetables for Sunday, the working-man's high festival. In a moment his mood changed: he had caught sight of the moon among the chimneys floating up out of London like a sweet soul let loose from the begrimed body of some labourer in mines or sewers, and immediately the seething market became loathsome as mites in a cheese, worms in a corpse: mere hunger, crawling and swarming over what it feeds on. He walked towards the moon and came to a standstill in the common at the London end of Pilgrimstow; a step or two further and

he would have lost sight of the new wonder. Far across the waste the gleaming disc glided along the roofs of a range of low, dark houses. He watched it until the pleasure palled; then with a sigh he turned his face towards the market again. He walked smartly—for him, that is—intending to go back to the “Rose and Crown,” and wait there till Mrs. Tiplady should return, but before leaving the market he kissed his gloved hand to the moon. The pure white light entranced him once more, and he thought, as a child might, to whom the knowledge of the fact was news, how strange that this pearly orb should be only a chill echo of the sun. Slowly his eye wandered to the west. A railway-bridge spanned the market where it joined the Enfield Road; and behind it the sunset smouldered still: the pale saffron of the sky was distinctly visible through and through the windows of the gas-lit signal-box—a strange effect, like looking at the sunset through a great glass of Rudesheimer.

A flush of pleasure mounted to Baptist Lake's face, and a smile touched his lips. While he gazed at this marvel a train of some length passed along the bridge, slowly, having just left Pilgrimstow Station; a hundred golden windows—it was a gas-lit train—framed in black, moved over the golden sky and brought it close and warm to the faces of the happy souls that were surely being wheeled away to heaven; but between each carriage a burnished streak of unveiled sunset shone clear and remote. Tears rose to the eyes of Baptist Lake; he threw back his head to restrain them, and walked languidly to the inn.

Two persons were turning away from the door of the private bar when Baptist Lake arrived at it. Both of them, although well-grown, were evidently little more than children. They walked hand in hand—a pretty girl and a pleasant-looking boy, as far as Baptist could see in the twilight. Disappointment was written in their actions: the girl pouted and tossed her head, and the

boy muttered petulantly. They looked behind when Baptist had passed them, and their faces cleared a little at the anticipation of the chagrin of another. Baptist glanced over his shoulder also, they were such a charming pair ; and seeing that they lingered he half turned to them and said, "Could you not get in?"

"No," replied the boy at once ; "the door's locked."

"Come, and I'll let you in," said Baptist.

The girl rather hung back, but the boy kept hold of her hand, and they followed Baptist, wondering very much at his having a key. When the three had entered, Baptist locked the door again. Having motioned his chance companions to be seated on a cushioned bench, he sank into the only chair in the compartment and, with a sigh and a stifled exclamation, proceeded to stare at the boy and girl as if they had been a group in Dresden china.

The private bar was now brilliantly lit with gas, and the first sense of prettiness

produced by the girl's appearance gave place on a closer view to a deep impression of great beauty. A broad white hat trimmed with marguerites, and a white muslin dress brocaded with green sprays, in that charming old fashion which has come round again, set off her face and figure to the best advantage. In stature she was above the average for women, and this was as noticeable when she sat as when she stood : her height was not merely length of limb ; her body, exquisitely shaped, kept a perfect proportion with the rest of her figure—a much rarer beauty than is generally supposed. If any one could have been so critical in her presence as to look for a fault in the symmetry of her person, his eye might have rested with passing regret on her shoulders, which were a thought too broad ; but men or magnanimous women might not long withhold their gaze from her face. Simplicity, gaiety, sweetness of disposition, high animal spirits, eager intelligence, all seemed to mingle in her ex-

pression. Her chin, curving out of her full throat, was round and strong, and her lower lip curled above it. Although well closed, her mouth was not of the rosebud type, but frank, bold even—the upper lip bent like a bow. Her nose was short and straight, with delicate nostrils. Her eyebrows were long, slightly arched and distinctly marked; and her smooth low brow was crowned with clustering ringlets of yellow hair. But her dazzling complexion, her oval face, and her golden locks, together and separately of surpassing beauty, served only as a frame for her wonderful eyes. Out of them a soul gazed—inno-cent, untarnished, unclad, ignorant, and fearless. They were large, of a dark blue, lustrous and deep. There was no escaping her eyes. She smiled with them, laughed with them, talked with them; there was more enchantment in them than in a Lapland philtre. Her soul seemed to dance in them, dream in them, imagine in them, watch and wonder in them.

The boy also endured a closer inspection with advantage to the first impression produced by his appearance. Baptist Lake noticed that his dark-coloured jacket-suit was of the best material, and of a superlative cut, as he might have phrased it. The boy was, of course, not so fully developed as the girl: the rounded limbs and full bust of the latter told of womanhood early ripe for this northern clime: but there was a manly look in his face, not so much owing to the dark shade on the upper lip as to his broad brows, the hardy glance of his hazel eyes, and the power in his lower jaw. His nose, high-bridged, had an undeveloped tendency towards the Roman pattern; his mouth was firm and well-shaped, and although the lips were thick they gave no token of indelicacy. His dark hair, tinged with red, was closely cropped. He was a little taller than the girl, but had not yet arrived at his full height.

Both the boy and the girl returned Baptist's gaze for several seconds. Then the

former grew restive, looked interrogatively at his companion, rose and rang the hand-bell. A buxom young woman with dark hair curling all over her head, and impudent laughing eyes, hurried in from the public bar, and greeted Baptist Lake with a smirk and a pert "Good evening, sir."

"We want something to drink, Florrie," said Baptist. "What shall it be?" he added, addressing the boy.

The boy looked with astonishment from Baptist to the barmaid, and then, in a loud voice, ordered shandy-gaff for two.

"No, no," said Baptist, rising and laying his hand on the boy's shoulder, "you are going to drink with me."

"Thank you ; no," said the boy, shaking off Baptist's hand.

"Nonsense," said Baptist, looking the boy in the face with his glossy brown eyes, and taking possession of him there and then. "You must give me this pleasure. Shandy-gaff for three, Florrie, in large tumblers. And divide a bottle of Bass—not your

draught beer. Do you like shandy-gaff?" he continued, turning to the girl.

"Yes, I do," replied the girl, in a soft, almost meaningless, voice, strangely at variance with her splendid eyes.

Baptist's large frankness and evident delight in them had conquered both the young people.

"Yes," he said, in his most charming manner, "shandy-gaff is clearly the drink for youth—I should say the drink for lovers. I remember I drank shandy-gaff when I was young. I haven't tasted it for a dozen years, but I am a boy to-night again. This will be a great experience. Shandy-gaff! Do you know, if you brood over it, the name is not nearly so vulgar as it seems. It might even be pronounced in a wistful, melancholy tone which would enable it to cover passionate meanings. Most indubitably it is the drink for first love. The mute, appealing look, the trembling pressure of hands, the faint, timorous kiss, are all symbolised by shandy-gaff. A

mild, sweetish drink with a dash of malt. Such is the early idea of love compared with the dreadful reality, the loaded wines, the brandy, the absinthe."

By this time the barmaid had brought three large tumblers, each three-quarters full of the dingy, beer-stained drink.

"Florrie," said Baptist, "what do you think of shandy-gaff?"

"Tipple for tootsies on bank-'olidsays."

"Do you ever drink it, Florrie?"

"Not me. I drink beer."

"Why do you drink beer, Florrie? I should have thought whiskey-and-lemonade or cherry-brandy more to your taste."

"Whiskey-and-lemonade!" exclaimed Florrie, turning up her impudent nose, and looking as disdainfully as her good-nature would allow at the two young people who drank their shandy-gaff with the true thirst of youth on a summer evening; "that's a green drink. Boys and old men are sweet-toothed. Oh, I know! At sixty, rum-and-sugar. That's your sort! Beer they begin

with; then they dotes on gin-and-ginger, whiskey - and - lemonade, sweetened stout. After that brandy-and-soda; then back to beer, and there they sticks till rum-and sugar time."

"A very wonderful generalisation! You speak by the card, Florrie."

"I speaks with authority, and not like as scrubs do. I ain't no 'tend-the-kitchen when business is slack, and wash up the dinner-dishes in the afternoon. I'm a barmaid, I am."

"How enchanting! Do you read the Bible, Florrie?"

"Course I do. Out of the mouths of babes and — barmaids, sir, to you. I've been to barracks."

With which deliverance Florrie retired to her own proper sphere of action, where, from the increasing exasperation of the demands for pots of four-'alf and twos of Irish cold, it was clear her presence was sorely needed.

"Florrie is very charming," said Baptist, sipping his shandy-gaff.

Observing that the other two watched him closely, and seemed to be waiting for him to speak, he set his tumbler down, took off his hat, and began a speech in honeyed accents.

“I am so delighted to meet you,” he said. “I seem to have known you all your lives; I understand you as Nature herself understands you.” Here he was interrupted by the entrance of Mrs. Tiplady.

“Ah!” he said, “you have returned. Mrs. Tiplady and I,” he continued, addressing the young people, “have some business to discuss. Good-night, good-bye.”

The girl, at whom Mrs. Tiplady darted across her apple cheeks a furtive glance of malice, shook hands with Baptist frankly; the boy was more reserved.

“Good-night, Mrs. Tiplady,” said the girl.

“Good-night, my dear,” said Mrs. Tiplady.

Baptist opened the door for them, and having bowed them out relocked it.

“A most idyllic pair!” exclaimed Baptist.

“The girl’s pretty, but she’ll come to no good,” said Mrs. Tiplady. “That young swell ’ll lead her off her feet—I hope,” she added mentally. “She’s the daughter of——”

“Oh, Mrs. Tiplady, don’t! Why should I know whose daughter she is? A beautiful girl and a passionate boy drinking shandy-gaff with the thirst of perdition—that is all I want to know, to remember. I hope I shall never see them again. Have you brought the money, Mrs. Tiplady?”

“Only three-fifty, Master Baptist. Your father wouldn’t give me a penny more. Thirty-four ten-pound notes and ten sovereigns. There you are, sir.”

Baptist took the roll of notes and the coins, and having pocketed them, said coolly, “It is fifty more than I need.”

“Goodness and mercy! Why did you ask for five hundred then?”

“Because I have observed that on the last three occasions when I have required

money I always received considerably less than I asked. In future, Mrs. Tiplady, I shall always demand exactly what I want. If I do not receive it, I shall go to my father."

"He would refuse to see you."

"I shall force my way to him."

"He would kill you."

Baptist laughed.

"He hates you, Master Baptist; if hate could kill, you are a dead man"

"Some day I shall insist on an explanation," said Baptist. "In the meantime it pleases me to live as we do. And when you consider it, Mrs. Tiplady, filial and parental affection are alike misapplied. They are the obverse and the reverse of that medal which Nature hangs round all our necks—I mean original sin. Nothing else can account for the mutual love of two wretched beings, the one compelling the other into the agony of life. The domestic affections are criminal, Mrs. Tiplady; otherwise human nature would not indulge them so luxuriously."

For the third time that evening Baptist Lake unlocked the door of the private bar. With a "Good-night," pronounced like a benediction, he left the "Rose and Crown," and Mrs. Tiplady soon heard the wheels of his hansom rattling over the stones of her stable-yard, as she leaned against the bar, with her portly bosom reposing on her plump arms. Her little eyes glittered and burned, and her apple cheeks seemed to grow riper with the warmth of some pleasant thought. The entrance of two or three young men and women disturbed her meditations, which were too sweet to be abandoned. She therefore summoned Florrie, and retired to her parlour.

IV.

THERE was once, according to Baptist Lake, a Londoner whose business unexpectedly required him to undertake a long sea-voyage. On his return he drove about London in hansoms for three days. "Heaven," he said, "is an asphalted street that runs winding and endless right through space; it is lined on both sides with beautiful shops, and filled with crowds and 'busses: along it the elect are driven in hansoms for ever and ever." In this apologue he expressed his own delight. His instinct for enjoyment always stuffed the inevitable 'with down. He eschewed railways and 'busses: the one, hell; the other purgatory: to live in a hotel, and go to one's pleasure in hansoms, was heaven and something more.

The first mile of the road from Pilgrim-

stow to London ran smoothly, and Baptist enjoyed it as if he had never been in a hansom before ; but a stretch of newly-laid macadam, which it was impossible to avoid, occurred near the beginning of the second mile, and disturbed him somewhat. Roused from his waking dream, he glanced out into the gas-lit road. They were passing a large public-house — some “Nag’s Head” or Queen’s Head”—and by the glare from the windows he caught sight of a pedestrian, the only one visible. Looking back he recognised the boy whom he had met in the “Rose and Crown.” He stopped the hansom and hailed this new acquaintance.

“Jump in,” he said, when the boy came up to him.

“No, thank you.”

“Oh, nonsense ! Jump in.”

The boy shook his head, and was about to turn away, but Baptist overcame him.

“Please come in,” he said.

“Well, then, understand,” said the boy, smiling and frowning at the same time,

“that it is of my own choice, and because this is a sort of adventure.”

“Most certainly,” rejoined Baptist.

“And so you want adventures?” he continued, when they were seated together, and the cab again in motion. “London is the city of adventure, and of adventurers. But, tell me, what is your name?”

“What’s yours?” said the boy, quickly.

“You *are* Scotch, then. I thought so from your accent. You have almost mastered it, though; and I hope you have mastered ‘shall’ and ‘will.’ The interrogative reply I suppose no Scotchman ever mastered. My name is Baptist Lake.”

“And you are English; I can tell by your impudence—your conceit—your presumption,” said the boy hotly.

“My dear—But you must tell me your name. We shall never talk pleasantly until you tell me your name. What is your name, please?”

“Islay Inglis,” said the boy sullenly.

“Islay Inglis. I don’t quite like the

sound ; it is not so harmonious as Baptist Lake. But, my dear Islay, you are an Englishman. ‘Inglis’ is just English. Your ancestor was an Englishman who settled in Scotland.”

“I know,” said the boy, in whose face an angry flush still glowed. “Any primer of philology will tell you that.”

“My dear Islay, you mustn’t talk of sources of knowledge. One’s information is one’s own, no matter where it came from, or however elementary it may be. That ‘Inglis’ is ‘English’ is a fact that interests me now for the first time. You must be a very remarkable person, Islay, combining in yourself the most remarkable qualities of two great races.”

“There is no distinction,” said Islay Inglis ; “the Scotch are just northern English, and the best of the breed.”

“Charming,” said Baptist, “charming. Tell me, Islay, why are you walking in this very forlorn part of London?”

“Tell me, Baptist,” said the boy, “why

you are driving in this very forlorn part of London ? ”

“ My dear Islay, you are the most delightful person I have met for a very long time. I am driving because I had to go to Pilgrimstow and back, and because there are two things I never do : I never walk to any place ; and I never take a bus or a train. Now, why are you walking ? ”

“ Because I had to go to Pilgrimstow and back, and because I prefer to walk. ”

“ In search of adventures ? ”

“ Yes. ”

“ And are you having adventures, Islay ? ”

“ Oh, yes. ”

“ How old are you, Islay ? ”

“ Fifteen and a half. ”

“ And your sweetheart—how old is she ? ”

“ What ? ”

“ Your sweetheart, Islay ; that exquisite girl who drank shandy-gaff as divinely as if it had been nectar ; how old is she ? ”

“ Now, look here, Mr. Baptist, ” said the

boy, his voice trembling with his throbbing pulses ; “ if you dare to speak of that lady again I shall strike you.”

“ My dear Islay, we are not musqueteers. People don’t strike each other in hansoms in London. I have not seen a lovelier girl for a long time, and I must talk——”

“ I warned you,” said the boy.

He was sitting on Baptist’s left, and he struck him full on the cheek with his right hand.

“ Charming,” said Baptist, stopping the cab. “ We can settle this at once.”

Islay stepped out after Baptist, and the latter having told the driver to wait for them at the second lamp from where they stood, climbed over a wooden fence into a field, closely followed by his companion. There were no buildings in the immediate neighbourhood, although three or four hundred yards nearer the City a railway with coloured lights bridged the road, and about the same distance behind them the lamp-lit windows of a short terrace were visible.

The moon had gone down, and Islay stumbled several times. Baptist led the way to a piece of thorn hedge, the sole remnant of a former division. It now ran aimlessly across the centre of the field, dark, shaggy, with scanty foliage—like the ghost of a hedge visiting in the night the scene of its pleasant duty, the place where it had sheltered birds, where it had made itself fragrant with blossom. Having gained the side of the hedge farthest from the road, Baptist took off his hat, coat, and vest and hung them on a branch.

“I can’t see,” said Islay, much impressed, but not frightened by the deliberate proceedings of his companion.

“I have the advantage of you there,” rejoined Baptist. “I can see in the dark.”

“Like a cat,” hissed Islay.

“Like a lion,” said Baptist. “Wait a little. Look at the hedge, and you will begin to see. Keep your eyes from the railway; don’t look even at the stars; study the darkness and you will see.”

“Do you perceive,” continued Baptist, after a pause, “the extraordinary significance of these accidental remarks? ‘Keep your eye away from the railway; don’t look even at the stars; study the darkness, and you will see.’ They are loaded with meaning. Attack me when you are ready.”

Islay followed the advice given him, and as soon as he began to distinguish the branches and the leaves of the hedge, he turned his gaze on his antagonist. Two lustrous eyes towered above him; he felt like a punt attacking a lighthouse.

“Ready,” he cried, and rushed on Baptist.

His attack was easily repelled. Thrice he renewed it, and each time when Baptist’s left hand met his right shoulder it seemed to him as if he had been driving against a bulkhead.

“I don’t know what to do. I can’t get at you,” he cried in dismay.

“Try a fall,” suggested Baptist.

“All right.”

They closed, and in a second Islay was lying on his back.

“You have been a very foolish boy,” said Baptist, picking him up. “You struck me, and I am going to punish you.”

He sat down on the rise of the hedge, and laying Islay, in spite of his struggles, across his knees, gave him a sound whipping.

“My dear Islay,” he said, as he released him, “now you know that boys can’t fight men—a very important lesson. We shall be the greatest of friends.”

But Islay burst into a storm of sobs, sobs without tears, and ran for the road. Baptist, starting in pursuit, followed only a few yards, and Islay also ceased running before he arrived at the fence, both remembering that they were stripped to the shirt. Baptist returned to the hedge and dressed himself quickly. He then took Islay’s clothes and made for a point in the fence much nearer the cab than that which Islay had run towards. Islay walked very

slowly, and when Baptist reached the road they met.

“Give me—my clothes,” said Islay, speaking in gasps between the sobs that still shook him.

Baptist held out the vest in both hands, and Islay made a snatch at it; but that was not what Baptist wanted.

“My dear Islay,” he said. “Had I known your high spirit would suffer so much, I would not have treated you as a boy. You are a man. I beg your pardon, Islay. Forgive me. Let me help you on with your clothes, and I will show you how to avenge yourself.”

Islay ceased sobbing, and stared at Baptist. Then he allowed himself to be dressed.

“Now,” said Baptist in his pleasantest manner, taking off his own coat, and bending his great body over the fence, “you can whip me till you are tired.”

“Baptist!” cried Islay. It was the cry of one delivered; tears and a last sob came with it.

“Why don’t you begin?” asked Baptist, looking round.

But Islay was hidden by Baptist’s coat, which he held out towards his conqueror. Baptist accepted the service in silence, and the pair were soon seated together in the hansom.

When they were in motion again Islay’s first impulse was to slip his arm into Baptist’s. It was done shyly.

“You can’t steal my heart that way,” said Baptist, hooking Islay’s arm closely. “I don’t wear it on my sleeve. But you do not need to steal it; you have it.”

Islay muttered something in the shape of thanks, and Baptist, who entertained himself with sentiment as he did with wine or cigarettes, enjoyed the boy’s sincerity.

“How strange,” he said, almost inaudibly, speaking more to himself than to Islay, “that sincerity should be awkward. The finest things, in life as in art, are always out of drawing.”

“Her name,” said Islay, breathing quickly, “is Rose—Rose Salerne.”

“Yes, Islay,” said Baptist, putting a world of invitation and welcome into the words. He understood that the boy, wishing to atone for his distrust, meant of his own accord to tell him all about his sweetheart.

“Her father is a tobacconist in Pilgrimage ; her mother is dead ; and she is just sixteen.”

When Islay began to talk of his sweetheart, he thought he was about to go on for half an hour. To his astonishment he suddenly felt that he had nothing more to say.

“Rose Salerne,” said Baptist in a melting voice, that made the boy shiver with delight. “Her name is almost as adorable as she is herself. How did you meet with her, Islay ?”

“Oh, just roaming about.”

“In search of adventures ?”

“Yes. We came to London a month ago, and after——”

“Who came to London a month ago?”

“My father and mother and I.”

“On a holiday?”

“No; for good. My father has given up business, and we are going to settle in London. My father,” continued Islay, perceiving that he had now a subject on which he could talk with ease, “was a ship-broker in Glasgow. He entered the council and became a bailie, and wanted to be provost in order to be knighted—they knight the provosts of Glasgow, you know; but he was passed over, so he wound up his business and came to London to enjoy himself. My father is a very extraordinary man. It is quite certain that if he had waited for another three years he would have been elected provost; but he wouldn’t. He makes up his mind about everything, and always knows exactly what he will do if the plan fails. I mean he always has a second plan which does not depend upon the will of others.”

“Admirable!”

Islay heaved a sigh of pleasure. Baptist's approbation had already become almost a necessity.

"My father—my father and I are great friends," continued Islay, endeavouring to subdue the proud tone that came into his voice. "We trust each other. But I haven't told him yet about Rose Salerne. I can't talk of her."

"Don't try to, Islay. What other adventures have you had since you came to London?"

"I don't call that an adventure."

"Ah! By adventure then you mean something in the nature of an exploit?"

"Yes, something in which one might be wounded or even killed."

"Or imprisoned?"

"Yes, or imprisoned."

"I can quite understand 'doing' a week or a fortnight as an experience, but I should never risk penal servitude. You won't risk penal servitude, Islay?"

"I don't know. I shall take my chance with the others."

"Then there is an exploit in preparation?"

"Oh, yes."

"Charming. I must join you, I think."

"Will you? That would be splendid."

"What is it? The highway?"

"No. . . . But I can't tell you. If you really think of joining us I will find out if they will let you."

"Do, Islay. We must steal the Mace, or the Madonna Ansidei, or the Elgin Marbles, or something.

Islay laughed and lounged back into his corner of the hansom quite in an ecstasy. Baptist's easy appreciation of his madcap humour gave him a new conceit of himself; he had never before had the entire sympathy of anyone so much older than he and of such shining qualities, too.

"And does your father know of this great adventure, Islay?" asked Baptist.

“No ; I can’t tell him. It is connected with Miss Salerne.”

“Don’t say Miss Salerne, Islay. Say Rose Salerne. Romeo never talked of Miss Capulet.”

The boy’s hair stood on end with pleasure. He knew by heart Romeo’s speeches and Juliet’s replies; to be equalled with these sacred lovers was to be already canonised.

“Have you not yet performed any exploits at all then ? ” asked Baptist.

“No,” replied Islay. “I have only been in London about a month, you know.”

“Of course ; you haven’t had time. But what led you to Pilgrimstow ? ”

“Nothing—chance. I walked out one day to Highgate Wood, wondering if I mightn’t find something there, and——”

“Charming,” said Baptist, under his breath.

But Islay heard him, although they were now rattling noisily along Old Street, and perceived a certain shade of mean-

ing, or thought he did, which made him blush.

“I can’t help it,” he said hotly. “I know that the days of adventure are over, but I never see a dozen old trees together without hoping against hope that a bowman may pass among their shadows. Well, if you’ve ever been in Highgate Wood you will know how disappointed I was. Part of it is trimmed and kept, and overrun with children and family parties, and part of it sown with broken crockery and ashes. I ran from it and went over Muswell Hill to Pilgrimstow. I was out of cigarettes, and turned into the first tobacconist’s I came to.”

At this point in his story Islay Inglis stopped suddenly, and looked with some diffidence at his companion, but as Baptist continued gazing straight between the horse’s ears Islay plucked up courage and, in a stronger voice and brighter manner than that in which he had started, continued his account of his first visit to Pilgrim-

stow. The change in the boy's tone was so striking that Baptist turned towards him and kept his eyes fixed on him while he talked, which marked attention, instead of disconcerting Islay, seemed to give him force and ease.

“A tall man stood behind the counter. He looked like a viking, I thought, with the wind entangled and asleep in his yellow beard and hair, and in his blue eyes the sea and the sky, deep and serene.”

Islay blushed here ; this image had been elaborated in his mind for days, and he was ashamed of himself for making believe that it was spontaneous. Boys quickly learn the tricks of men ; but that one, of hatching well-turned sentences, and epigrams, and paradoxes, and keeping them stowed away in the cheek like a serpent-brood to be emitted upon occasion as if newly born, is an accomplishment hardly ever studied before the age of twenty-five. Perceiving nothing but attention, deference even, in Baptist's face, Islay's momentary confusion

passed, and he continued his story with confidence.

“For a second or two I was unable to speak to this man, and when I did recover from my surprise at such a sight in a little tobacco shop, I was ashamed to ask for some cigarettes; so I bought half-a-pound of bird’s-eye. The viking made it up into a packet as neatly as a girl could have done; and said as he handed it to me, ‘You’ll be from the north?’”

“Did you recognise my accent?” I asked.

“‘No,’ he said; ‘I knew ye for a Scotchman. I can tell them at a glance, high and low of them. There’s something about a Scotchman, or a Scotch laddie, if he’s a lad at all, ye can never mistake. I canna’ give it a name.’

“‘Why, you’re Scotch yourself!’” I said.

“‘In a way,’ he replied. ‘I lived in it for a matter of fifteen years. But I’m a Belminster man; all the Salernes come from Belminster.’

“ I looked at the packet of tobacco, and saw the name on the bag, ‘ Paul Salerne.’

“ ‘ It’s an uncommon name,’ I said.

“ He nodded and made no reply ; but I was determined to know more of him, and his air of mystery and adventure. So I said, ‘ I’ve walked from London, and I mean to walk back, but I must have a rest and a drink. Won’t you come with me?’

“ ‘ It’s nearly half-past four,’ said he, looking at a wag-at-the-wall that hung behind him. ‘ We have tea at that time. Come and have tea with us.’

“ I was only too glad to accept his invitation, and that made him very friendly. You may think, perhaps, I ought to have been suspicious, but you have only to see Paul Salerne to know that anything underhand, any ulterior motive, is quite foreign to his nature.”

Islay blushed again as soon as he had uttered this sentence : he felt its priggishness.

“Well,” he continued, hurrying on to escape the sense of self-dissatisfaction; “here’s the act of a man of perfect sincerity and honesty. Salerne said, ‘Give me that packet.’ I handed him the bird’s-eye, and he gave me back the price of it. ‘You don’t smoke bird’s-eye, lad,’ he said smiling. ‘Why you bought it, I can’t rightly divine.’ I was annoyed, and asked him how he knew I didn’t smoke bird’s-eye. ‘I divined it,’ he said.

“At half-past four, an old woman in a tartan dress and a crape cap came in from the room at the back of the shop and whispered Salerne that tea was ready.

“‘Set another cup, Mrs. Macalister,’ said Salerne. ‘This young gentleman will take tea with us.’

“Mrs. Macalister, whom I afterwards found to be housemaid, cook, and shop-assistant all in one, glanced from Salerne to me with amazement. She was thin and scraggy, with the skin of her nose very tight and glazed-like. Her eyes were sunk

in her head, but big ; and as she blinked at us she looked like a monkey. She opened her mouth as if to speak, but thinking better of it tapped with her bony knuckles on a silver-mounted ram's horn that stood on the counter, and took from it a large pinch of snuff. She then returned to the room, walking with short quick steps. We heard the rattle of a cup and saucer, and a sound as if a teaspoon had been shied at them, whereupon Mrs. Macalister reappeared. As I followed the viking into the parlour, I looked back and saw Mrs. Macalister helping herself fiercely to another pinch of snuff.

“ ‘Here’s a young Scotch gentleman, Rose,’ said Salerne. ‘My daughter, sir.’

“ You know what like Rose is. . . No ; I can’t tell you—I can’t tell you any more. I fell in love with her—in love ; and have seen her every day since, and her father is quite well pleased. He had known my father in Glasgow, had worked for my father in some way. I’m going on an

adventure with him, and I'm going to marry Rose."

"An enchanting story, Islay, enchanting," said Baptist Lake. "But let me say one little word. You mustn't be so garrulous in your narratives. It is the fault of the very young and the very old, and a special fault of Scotch people, I think. They are more reticent than the English, and yet they talk more—as a result of their reticence. They go into details, endeavouring always to escape the main point, which in the end they jump, as you did just now. You wanted, you know, Islay, to tell me about your love for Rose Salerne, and gave me all this long screed of 'said he' and 'said I' instead. But it was very charming of you."

Islay muttered some reply. He was indignant at the criticism, and at the same time enthralled by Baptist's perfect sympathy with his boyishness, and understanding of the simple mood which seemed to himself so complex.

“I wonder where we are now,” said Baptist after a short pause. “Ah! in Holborn. What a crowd! what a rustle and murmur! what a London it is! Have you ever thought of London, Islay? tried to conceive it, to define it, to put it into an epigram? The dreadful entrails of the place, the veins of water and light, the electric nerves; the shaking of the streets with the tides of life that throb underground, that rush and roar above—you can’t define them. The luxury and the squalor that crowd at opposite poles, but are yet everywhere intermixed, cannot be crushed into an epigram. London, an epitome of the three kingdoms, with more Scotch people than Edinburgh, more Irish than Dublin; an epitome of the world. But it is impossible to realise what London is. Do you know, I sometimes think that centuries hence some great painter will paint a wonderful picture, some great novelist will write a wonderful description, of London, each as unlike the actual city

as Turner's or Flaubert's Carthage is unlike Dido's town; but the contemporaries of these artists will have a truer idea than us of immensity, of innumerable crowds, of frantic expenditure, of pleasure and misery, of greatness and meanness, because they will imagine what we must contemplate."

Nothing more was said by either until the hansom was brought to a standstill in a "block" at Piccadilly Circus.

"And now, Islay," said Baptist, "where is your ancestral domain?"

"We're living in a hotel just now—Whitgroom's in Bond Street."

"Charming. I live in a hotel too. I shall set you down at Whitgroom's."

Baptist instructed the driver, and there was again silence in the hansom until it turned into Bond Street.

"Will you come with me, Baptist?" asked Islay, a tremor in his voice.

"I should be charmed; but your father and mother, Islay?"

“They will be charmed, too. You don’t understand. They’re splendid ; we’re companions.”

“Ah ! Have you infected them with your adventurous spirit ? I have caught it too, I think : I would go anywhere you chose to ask me just now.”

Islay was intoxicated with delight. To have impressed so favourably such a wonderful man as this Baptist, was to him the second greatest triumph of his life. The lover of Rose Salerne and the friend of Baptist Lake, the one the most beautiful of women, the other the most complete of men ! Truly things were happening ; and his fledgling thought began to perceive that, after all, exploits with swords and pistols are mere sound and fury signifying nothing, compared with the encounters of the soul.

V.

AN entire flat of Whitgroom's had been rented by Islay's father when he fled from Glasgow. As Islay had said to Baptist Lake, John Inglis was a man who always had a second plan independent of the will of others ; and when he found it necessary to fall back on his *pis aller* he was prompt in its execution. So it had been with his exodus from Scotland. The day he lost the provostship he began his preparations, and in less than three weeks was in London with his family. At the time when our story opens he had just completed the purchase of a house and furniture in Lancaster Gardens, Kensington. The Honourable Philip Babchurch, once an impecunious cadet of the Basingbourne family and husband of Maud Boxtree, old Boxtree the furniture man's heiress, had

been the owner of No. 10 Lancaster Gardens, presented to him by his doting father-in-law on his marriage day—"very heroically," as the Honourable Philip put it. At the end of the honeymoon, just as the Honourable Philip's creditors were beginning to whet their beaks, old Boxtree, again "very heroically," died. Maud Boxtree must have inherited old Boxtree's heroism, for she died too, shortly after her father, leaving the Honourable Philip master for life of the Boxtree fortune. No. 10 Lancaster Gardens was placed in the market at once with all the splendid Boxtree fittings and furniture, and the Honourable Philip took chambers in Piccadilly. He was rather a graceless creature; but at the last moment he dashed in on the Inglis family in Whitgroom's. With one eye eclipsed behind an eye-glass, and the other glaring blankly, he shook hands all round.

"Awfully glad!" he said. "The old place is passing into good hands; but I say,

you know ; I quite forgot—how could I!—one or two things I must remove. I—in fact, I'm going to clear out Maud's bedroom."

John Inglis grasped the graceless creature's hand tightly when he left, and sent him that very day the whole contents of the bedroom of poor Maud Babchurch, *née* Boxtree.

It was half-past ten when Baptist Lake and Islay entered the Inglis dining-room in Whitgroom's. Dessert was still on the table ; for the dinner had been later than usual. Next week they were to remove to Lancaster Gardens, and the ladies had been at the house all day. They might have been there still had not Mr. Inglis carried them away by force. Rapid talk ceased abruptly on the entrance of Baptist and Islay ; but the air felt electric. Three women and one man stared at the two.

"Well, Islay—" began the eldest of the women, Islay's mother ; but her son interrupted her. He introduced his new friend, and gave him a seat at the table.

Islay's mother was a particularly gracious-looking woman. Formed in a large mould, she inclined to be stout now in middle life—she was barely forty-five; but corpulence had not yet hidden the suave lines of her handsome figure. Laughter and a soft light lurked in her grey eyes, and her pleasant mouth was as fresh as a girl's. Her abundant brown hair, divided Madonna-wise was loosely coiled, and you saw when she spoke that she had all her-teeth, regular, pearly white, and of a good size.

John Inglis, two years older than his wife, was equally well-preserved, and looked even younger than she. Islay was very like him: the dark hair with the dash of red, the hardy hazel eyes, the Roman nose, the large, thick-lipped, but delicate mouth, and the strong jaw were the same—more developed in the father, and yet if anything more refined. He wore a moustache and full beard; and there was not a grey hair in his head.

The two young women, married sisters of Islay, were like their mother. Baptist noticed that they were both about to become mothers—evidently very near their confinement.

“I’m very glad to see you, sir,” said Mr. Inglis, as soon as Baptist and Islay were seated. “Any friend of Islay’s is always welcome.”

“Your son and I,” said Baptist, “although we met for the first time to-night, seem to have known each other all our lives; and when he told me that you were living in a hotel, a fellow-feeling made me anxious to see you, for I also live in a hotel. I prefer to do so for a great many reasons—perhaps chiefly because of the irresponsibility. With a house there is apt to be, some say there ought to be, another than the mere cash-nexus between master and servant. Now, I think the whole tendency of the times is to reduce all relations between human beings to terms of pounds, shillings, and pence; and as I wish

to be in the fore-front of the age I live in a hotel."

True to his invariable habit in accidental encounters, Baptist had given utterance to the first notion that occurred to him ; but on this occasion he deviated from his other invariable habit of indifference, or rather absolute certainty, as to the effect produced. Much interested in the strange family with which chance had made him acquainted, he watched the result of his speech in the expression of his auditors. The two young women looked at him kindly, but their eyes acknowledged only the beauty of his voice, and the charms of his person ; there was some kind of response to his hap-hazard remark in Mrs. Inglis's glance, and Baptist judged at once that she had more brains than her daughters ; Islay, persuaded out of Shakespeare and Scott of the romance, and therefore of the sweet reasonableness of the feudal idea of the relation of master and servant, shook his head reproachfully ; and

Mr. Inglis, settling himself in his chair and crossing his legs, declared in a fine bass voice, with a strong Glasgow accent, that he thought Mr. Lake was very far wrong.

“You may say what you like, sir,” said Mr. Inglis cheerfully; “but I maintain that the proper relation between human beings is patriarchal—you know what I mean. As a matter of fact we are leaving this hotel on Monday to set up house again, and I am very glad of it.”

“Yes,” said Baptist, “I believe you are quite right. For a bachelor, however, a hotel is the thing.”

“I dare say,” said Mr. Inglis; “but women must have a home.”

“Islay here, I’m sure,” said Baptist, “prefers a hotel. Adventures are to be had in hotels.”

Islay, who was busy eating cake and fruit, pushed the plates towards Baptist.

“As a bachelor, of course,” he said, when his mouth was empty. “A married man must have a home of his own.”

"Islay," said Mrs. Inglis, startled and amused at her son's gravity, "what are you talking about?"

"Islay," said his father, "is great on adventures. We are all waiting for something extraordinary to happen."

"I'm afraid," said Mrs. Inglis, "Islay will be disappointed. I have never had any adventures."

"Nor I," said Mr. Inglis. "But we didn't go roving about London when we were fifteen, my dear."

"Adventures come to us all," said Baptist, "at all ages. You will have adventures yet, Mr. Inglis. I am myself prepared to break a lance for Mrs. Inglis any day."

"No," said Mr. Inglis, "I shall never have any adventures. I'm much too inferior a man ever to have adventures."

"Too inferior, Mr. Inglis?" said Baptist. "How you interest me! I should say at once that no inferior man ever had the courage to speak out so plainly about him

self to a stranger. Do tell me what you mean ? ”

“It’s quite simple,” said Mr. Inglis, with the utmost good-humour. “I began the world with the proverbial half-crown, and I am now a wealthy man ; therefore I must be inferior.”

“Oh ! admirable ! admirable ! ” exclaimed Baptist.

Islay and the two young women had exchanged glances commiserating each other when Mr. Inglis began on his own inferiority : they had heard it often ; but Baptist Lake’s warmly expressed appreciation renewed their interest in this piece of self-criticism.

“You see,” continued Mr. Inglis, inspired by the attention that appeared in every face, “most of the men who started life with me have failed. One is a doctor, helping paupers into the world all day and all night ; and he will never get out of the slums ; he is too superior a man to advertise himself, and backbite the saw-boneses in

his neighbourhood. Another is a school-master with a hundred and fifty a year, in an outlandish village : he is too superior a man to give his scholars a smattering of three or four sciences and languages, of which he has only a smattering himself ; he prefers to teach them plainly what he knows ; therefore he always has a small grant, and will never get out of the bit. A third is—— now, I'll be honest for once. None of the men who started life with me became a minister ; but if one of them had he would doubtless have been too superior to gild the crown of thorns and put buttons on the spikes and hang an embroidered screen before the cross. He would have told of the scourging, of the nails, and of the bloody sweat, and filled his church with the poor, and died at forty worn out with preaching from his very soul, twice on Sundays, and with visiting a hundred or two distressed folk every week. And some of them, ploughmen's sons, like me, became clerks in banks and shipping

offices : one rose to be a teller with three hundred a year, but he was a dunce. Most of the others are still clerks with a pound or thirty shillings a week each ; for they were too superior—and, mind you, it is superiority—to try to excel their neighbours. They didn't learn shorthand and French at nights, and take lessons in caligraphy, and find out little secrets about their fellows, and do overtime for nothing, and—the ladies 'll let me say it—lead away servant girls, and marry rich widows, and become deacons and elders. No ; they went to theatres and music-halls, and drank a little, and tried to live, poor fellows ; and some died in hospital, and some in their fathers' homes, and some are clerks still. But they were all superior—I maintain it—and failed like men. I have succeeded ; therefore I am inferior.”

“ You didn't find out secrets about your fellows ? ” said Islay.

“ I can't say I did ; but I was advanced over the heads of two older men, because I

knew shorthand, and could write a business letter in French."

"And the servant-girls, John?" said Mrs. Inglis.

"I hadn't time, my dear. I was only eighteen when I married you."

Baptist, who had never really been in a family circle before, was enchanted with the conversation, and wondered if such talk was common among relatives who were on good terms with each other; he was inclined to think not.

"You interest me very much, Mr. Inglis," he said. "But you haven't made it quite clear to me why you are inferior."

"Haven't I? Isn't it self-evident? A man doesn't realise a fortune without giving his mind to it, and the making of money brings into play all the inferior qualities. The cunning of a fox, the tenacity of a wolverine, and the ruthlessness of a gorilla that lets down a hairy paw out of a tree, seizes you by the throat, and drops you dead for the mere pleasure of the thing

while you are looking at the flowers—these go to make a good business-man, and where these are there's inferiority."

"But you are not like a fox, and a wolverine, and a gorilla, Mr. Inglis," said Baptist.

"Good God, I must be!" cried Mr. Inglis. "I made a fortune out of half-a-crown. I must be."

"Then why do you keep the fortune? Why not give it away?"

"Ah! that's a different story. You see, I'm a Calvinist. I was born a Calvinist, just as you may have been born an Arminian."

"I think I'm a Calvinist too," said Baptist. "At any rate I want to be what you are."

"Well, you're inferior if you're a Calvinist," rejoined Mr. Inglis, laughing heartily. "If you want to be a superior person you must be born an Arminian. Arminians are great philanthropists. Everybody is to have a palm and a harp, and plenty of whisky and porridge, and not a hair of

anybody's head is to be singed; and the wickeder you are the more whisky and porridge I suppose. I've known Arminians; they're very superior people, and can lift everybody into heaven: a servants' hoist and a visitors' hoist on earth, but a huge balloon for all and sundry to scale the clouds. And so they keep their neighbours poor, and thrust them into hospitals and poor-houses, because it'll all come right in heaven. But I'm a Calvinist—much too inferior to take such a far-sighted view of things. I believe that the Kingdom of Heaven is here now on earth; and that everything is ordained, and fore-ordained, and predestined and unchangeable. The wealthy, and those that become wealthy, are the elect in spite of themselves; and the poor are in hell, and you'll never get them out: and it's right. Isn't that an inferior view?"

"Very inferior," replied Baptist. "I am happy to say that I think I also am 'inferior.'"

“Well, I hope so for your own sake,” said Mr. Inglis, pleased to find a man, and an Englishman too, who could catch his humour at once : most Englishmen, in Mr. Inglis’s opinion, know that the suggestion of a surgical operation for the introduction of a joke was made first of all by a Scotchman in the interests of a Southron ; and that there is reciprocity in the international denial of the power to appreciate humour.

“Well then, you see,” continued Mr. Inglis, “being one of the elect, I can’t possibly have adventures. I’m to be comfortable and contented all my life. I sometimes wish I had been one of the damned, like Islay there. There’s hope for you, Islay ; you’re one of the damned. You mean to insist on having adventures, don’t you ?”

“I do,” said Islay. “I should think there are worse things than being damned.”

“Bravo, boy !” said his father. “I should think there are. And there’s first of all being saved. That’s much worse

than being damned. As God's in heaven, I would sooner burn in fire for all eternity than be afraid to whistle on Sundays, and have to sit down to a meal of slops in the afternoon after listening to two sermons from a man I could double up with half a word if he would come out of his pulpit. Are you one of the damned, Mr. Lake?"

"Doubly and trebly," said Baptist, aglow with enthusiasm for Mr. Inglis's gospel of damnation.

"Then do you have adventures, Baptist, real adventures?" asked Islay, pricking up his ears.

"Oh ! endless adventures," replied Baptist.

"No ! But do you ? Tell us the last one," said Islay, spreading his arms on the table, and looking up at Baptist, ready to drink in every word.

"Shall I ? Well," said Baptist—"but I must smoke. May I smoke, Mrs. Inglis ?"

"Certainly, Mr. Lake," said Mrs. Inglis.

"I used to try a cigarette myself when I was younger, but I don't care about it now."

Baptist took a cigarette and so did Islay, while Mr. Inglis lit a cigar.

"*In medias res*," said Baptist. "I gave the crossing sweeper a penny, and at the same instant a highly-tailored old gentleman gave him sixpence. I looked closely at Cræsus. He returned my gaze, and as we crossed the street together, I said, 'Why did you give him sixpence?'"

"The old gentleman made no reply, and when we reached the pavement I was about to leave him. He touched my shoulder, however, and said 'See here.'

"I looked at the hand which he held out, and saw that it contained a score or two of sixpences. He returned the money to his pocket in silence. His face was not without distinction, nor was its expression by any means purposeless. Yet there was a helpless destined look about it. He stood still watching me. Evidently he wanted to talk.

“‘I understand,’ I said. ‘These were half-sovereigns when you first put them into your pocket, but when you take them out, they prove to be sixpences—a common occurrence in this city of enchantment.’

“‘No,’ he said, smiling faintly. ‘They were never anything but sixpences.’

“‘What do you do with so many of them then, and why did you give the crossing-sweeper one?’” said I.

“There was nothing discourteous in questioning him so point-blankly. His whole manner invited interrogation. A commissionaire moved us on; we had been standing in front of the box entrance to a theatre.

“‘I shall tell you,’ said the old gentleman, leading the way into the Café Cosmopolite.

“He gave me a sixpenny cigar, and insisted on my drinking Kummel.

“‘A glass of Kummel,’ he said, ‘is the only thing in London the price of which is invariably sixpence.’

“‘I am afraid you are a doctrinaire,’ I said.

“‘I wish I were,’ said he. ‘I wish I had a creed, a set of opinions about anything. But it’s impossible : I’ve no soul.’

“‘No soul!’

“‘No. But you seem surprised.’

“‘It’s a frank admission which few would make.’

“‘Not at all ; there are plenty of old fellows like me who have no souls. Some of them brag about it ; some of them don’t know it ; a few are chagrined. I know several among my acquaintance, and they’re rich like myself. Two of them are chagrined, and have taken up with hobbies. Whenever you find a man with a hobby, you may know he has no soul. Both of those consciously soulless friends of mine invented their hobbies. One devotes his energies to raising temporarily the price of insignificant commodities. He has a big building like a factory near his country house, in which he stores his

purchases; it is a very curious museum. On one occasion he bought up all the slate-pencil in the market; on another, all the marbles—boys' marbles, I mean. He has gigantic collections of peg-tops, thimbles, india-rubber balls, nut-crackers, button-hooks, cherry-wood pipes, and dozens of other things. The other soulless man began by collecting green china, at the time the blue ware became fashionable. He found it to be much rarer than the blue, and mostly ugly. The great peculiarity about his green china is that it's all delft—all I've seen of it at any rate. Then he took to collecting green fabrics—velvet, silk, broadcloth, bombazine, baize, green books, green bottles, green liquids, green tea, green cigars—anything and everything called and coloured green. He built a row of almshouses for green people; they're full. My hobby is sixpences. I come into town with a purseful of sovereigns, and spend the day in changing them for sixpences. I go from shop to

shop. It's not difficult, but it takes a lot of time.'

" 'But you could easily get all the sixpences you want without all that trouble,' I said.

" 'You forget I want the trouble more than the sixpences. When all the sovereigns are changed I walk about the streets, until I have given away the last sixpence, and then I go home.'

" 'And do you do this every day?'

" 'Oh no! I have seen me do it every day for a week on end; sometimes perhaps only twice a month. When I am tired of eating and drinking, and putting off and on my clothes, tired of billiards, of cards, of talk, of theatres, of newspapers, of books, I take to my sixpences. You see it is my own invention. I enjoy the visits to the shopkeepers, and I enjoy the hundreds of surprises I give at night to men, women, and children. Of course my sixpences are mostly bestowed on poor people; but I stop well-dressed, stylishly-dressed, men

and women, and gravely tender them the little coin. Few of them reject it: suspicion, hesitation, but seldom rejection. You see, it's always a sixpence, and they can say to themselves that I'm mad. It's my own invention: that's the source of my pleasure: I know that there is nobody in the whole world doing as I'm doing. Sixpence is my substitute for soul.'

"And on your off-days you live the ordinary life of a gentleman about town?"

"Yes! but sixpence still remains my distinguishing feature. I shall give this waiter sixpence; had he served a dinner at three guineas a head, he should have had sixpence and no more. My tip is always sixpence. When I am asked for a loan I offer a sixpence. The greatest event in my career will be when a man saves my life, and I give him sixpence. I am to be buried with sixpence in my hand for St. Peter or Charon, lest it should turn out that I have a soul after all.'

"He paid the waiter and gave him

sixpence, and we went out. At the door I asked him for a loan. He gave me sixpence, and turned towards the Hay-market. His accent had dropped a hint as to his nationality. When he had gone I thought I might as well make sure ; so I went after him, and asked him for another loan.

“ ‘No,’ he said ; ‘not twice to the same person on the same day : that would make a shilling.’ ”

“And I knew he was a Scotchman.”

Islay was disappointed with Baptist’s adventure ; the two young women looked tolerant and smiled drowsily with their heads on one side ; Mrs. Inglis thought it was a very strange story, and said so, and Mr. Inglis said, “That’s very fine.”

“Do you like it ? ” asked Baptist, forgetting that he had professedly been telling an adventure, not an invention, of his own.

“Yes,” replied Mr. Inglis, speaking slowly, unused to such a direct appeal for approbation. “I like it very much. The

dig at the Scotch care for the siller seems to me needless; but I suppose you had to end with a point of some kind."

"No," said Baptist, "that is exactly how it occurred. What dreadful critics you Scotch people are! I don't believe you are a bit more given 'to herd the penny,' is that right?"—Mr. Inglis nodded—"than the English: that's a calumny I think; but you *do* find fault."

"I daresay we do," said Mr. Inglis; "but it's because we see the fault."

"Charming!" said Baptist under his breath.

"But I say," cried Mr. Inglis pointing to the black marble clock on the mantelpiece, "it's after eleven. Bairns, be off to bed."

Mr. Inglis kissed his daughters, and Mrs. Inglis kissed her son. Then the three women wished Baptist good-night, while Mr. Inglis opened the door for them: as they passed out he laid his hand gently on the shoulder of each.

"Islay?" he said, again looking at the clock.

"Yes, father," rejoined Islay; "I'm going. But I would like to speak to you first."

"Ah!" said Mr. Inglis. "Mr. Lake, will you come to my room? I'm not going to bed for two hours yet, and I'll be very glad of your company."

"With pleasure," replied Baptist. "When shall I see you again?" he asked, as he shook hands with Islay.

"I don't know. I'm going on my adventure to-morrow. You'll hear of me at Lancaster Gardens some time next week."

"Remember," whispered Baptist; "a week or a fortnight, but no penal servitude; it lacerates the soul with a wound that never heals. I have met convicts and *forçats*, and know. Be careful."

"Well, Islay, are you in a scrape?" asked Mr. Inglis, when he returned after conducting Baptist to his sanctum.

“No,” said Islay; “but I’m running into one.”

“What kind of a scrape is it?”

“I can’t tell you.”

“Can’t you avoid it? Is it worth the risk?”

“It’s not really a scrape; it’s an adventure. The chance may never occur again. I’ll be away for a day or two.”

“Will you?”

“Yes; and I may need some money.”

“You shall have it, Islay.”

“But I shall be away before you’re up to-morrow.”

“Then I’ll give it you to-night.”

Mr. Inglis handed his son all the money he had in his pockets, and Islay seemed satisfied. The pair then left the room together. Islay went to bed, and his father joined Baptist Lake.

VI.

JOHN INGLIS called himself a ploughman's son, but his father had been a farmer, and well-to-do—the descendant of a long line of farmers belonging to Kyle, Burns's division of Ayrshire. Inglis is a border name, and in all likelihood the first of the race to settle in Ayrshire was not a direct importation from England, but some moss-trooper, lured by the bright eyes of an Ayrshire farmer's lass to forsake his wild life, hang up his jack and spear in the spence, and yoke his Galloway nag with his father-in-law's Clydesdale. However that may have been, the Ayrshire Inglises are able to trace their descent as far back as the end of the seventeenth century. John Inglis settled in the Glen of Balsharach in Kyle about 1690, and his descendants continue to reside there to the present day. This first John

Inglis was a man of marked character, and of great piety. There are still preserved a series of fourteen prayers written by him between 1693 and 1710. A quotation from one or two of them will give, better than any exposition, an idea of the kind of men from whom our Inglises are descended.

The conclusion of one of these prayers, dated "17 May, 1698," runs as follows:—

"And now glory be to thee, O God the Father, whom I shall be bold from this day forward to look upon as my God and father, that ever thou shouldest have found out such a way for the rescue of undone sinners! Glory be to thee, O God the Son, who hast loved me and washed me from my sins in thine own precious blood, and art now become my saviour and redeemer! Glory be to thee, O God the Holy Ghost, who by the finger of thine almighty power has turned about my heart from sin to God!

"O dreadful Jehovah! the Lord God omnipotent, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,

thou art now become my Covenant Friend, and I, through thine infinite grace, am become thy Covenant Servant. Amen, so be it. And the Covenant which I have made on earth, let it be ratified in Heaven."

Although this passionate faith, this un-awed security, were the notes of the first John Inglis's prevailing mood, sometimes the tension of thought and emotion produced a slight reaction, not of doubt, still less of despair, not even a sense of insufficiency which so often alternates with self-confidence in strong religious natures. He would seem rather to have been actuated by some undefined fear lest God should not look on him and his affairs with a due regard for their importance. The mental attitude of this other prayer, composed two years after the one given above, is liker that of a great feudal vassal, yielding the stipulated homage to his suzerain, than that of a frail human being in presence of his Creator.

"Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, I renounce

the Devil, the World, and the Flesh, and do here now promise and covenant in the sight of God and in his strength to fight under his banner.

“And now glory be to thee, O Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for ever and for ever, Amen.

“This is the year of God, 1700, July the first day, in the Glen of Balsharach. And God is witness.”

Surely there are many steps—leaps and bounds, hills and streams and seas between the high unquestioning faith of the first John Inglis, and the humorous gospel of damnation of the John Inglis the reader knows. And yet the father of our John Inglis, dying nearly two hundred years after the date of his ancestor's prayers, differed little in the expression, as in the nature, the sincerity and strength, of his religious opinions from the old Covenanting farmer, who felt himself to be a special friend of God's. In many country districts of Scotland, where the land and the air are un-

contaminated by mines or manufactures, where there is no seething mass of underfed and overlaboured humanity ready for the agitator's leaven, the stern creed for which men forsook all and endured all, remains uncorrupted and undefiled.

William Inglis, Islay's grandfather, used his ancestor's prayers, not only because they had become the liturgy of the family, but because they expressed his own unfaltering belief and passionate adoration. As for our John Inglis, he was the first of the race, in this country at least, to come in contact with modern ideas. His father's hair would have stood on end at the things he said, the things he did, and the things he left undone. The piano on Sabbath, novels, French novels, too; a non-churchgoer, a frequenter of theatres, a blasphemer, and one who enjoyed heartily the stories of the smoking-room: to his father, a veritable son of perdition. Perhaps, however, the seas and streams dividing the Covenanter's prayers from John Inglis's topsy-turvy

gospel of damnation would shrink into small bulk could thought be stripped of expression, and the real meaning behind words made plain; which it never can be in this world. Once when Inglis had been accused of irreverence by a Scotch clergyman, he had replied, "But I am not irreverent; I am humorous; and that is just exactly what your religion needs. Christ, it seems to me, cannot have been the Son of God, because God made man in his own image; now humour, of which Christ had none, is man's highest gift. We want a humorous religion. We will have to clothe our religion in humour instead of poetry, for a change." Religion is the Scotchman's subject; and even the most uneducated have often some striking theological remarks to make.

The Inglises were always straightforward, honest men, and most excellent sons, husbands, and fathers. They took great pride in their reputation, and were never at any trouble to conceal that they did so; they

made a boast of having a good conceit of themselves. A saying of one of their number was often referred to in the family with much complacence. On the 27th of June—every Inglis knew the family history as intimately as a herald knows the genealogy of a royal house—on the 27th of June, 1771, a John Inglis was married to a Sarah Dick. The parents of the couple had every reason to esteem them highly, and their praise was in everybody's mouth. On the marriage day, when the bridegroom's father entered the room where the bride was sitting, he exclaimed, "There she sits like a weel-tappit hen, but she's no' a match for my son, John." Every Inglis was proud of this saying, but their friends as well as their enemies quoted it against them.

When Islay's father was fifteen William Inglis gave up the farm of Balsharach to his eldest son, and went to Glasgow with two unmarried daughters and John, who was the youngest child. His wife had died several years before. There were two more

sons—one in Australia, the other in Canada, both prosperous. John matriculated at Glasgow University, the intention being to make him a minister, but he refused to study, and was sent to business.

He made rapid progress, living quietly with his father during the few years the latter survived his migration to Glasgow. Before his death, William Inglis saw both his daughters well married, and his youngest son on the high road to fortune. At the age of eighteen, John married Mary McClymont, the daughter of a farmer whose land marched with Balsharach, and placed what money his father had left him in the shipping business in which he was employed. His "half-crown" was really several thousand pounds. At twenty-one he became junior partner. He was soon the most influential member of the firm, and made money as rapidly as many shippers lost it. Islay's account of his father's sudden flight from Glasgow was quite correct. John Inglis had entered the

Town Council, and played the game with the rest. He could, as Islay said, have been Provost and a knight had he chosen to wait ; but it was not worth another three years' drudgery, wire-pulling, and being all things to all men. He had money enough and to spare, his daughters were married, Islay was his only son ; there was no earthly reason why he should not go to London. So to London he went.

Cigars and whiskey were on the table in John Inglis's room in Whitgroom's Hotel, but Baptist Lake asked for something to eat.

"Surely," said Inglis, and summoned his own special waiter.

Baptist ordered three dozen oysters and a bottle of Assmanhaussen.

"Do you know," said Mr. Inglis, lighting a cigar, and helping himself to whiskey, "I don't think there is in all broad Scotland a man who would have done as you have done just now."

"Ordered a pleasant supper for himself

at the expense of another whom he had just met for the first time?" said Baptist. "No, nor do I know another Englishman, besides myself, who would have done it. Pickled salmon, and cold meat, or a cutlet or a steak, the ordinary man would have asked for. It is one of the advantages of being extraordinary, of being a Calvinist, whether you are of the elect or of the damned, that you insist on finding earth heaven."

"I like that," said Mr. Inglis. "I like a man who believes that there is nothing too good for him, and always lays hands on what he prefers. I've done it pretty well all my life. For example, I like children, and I like mothering women, and I mean to have all my grandchildren born in my own house. The two girls you saw to-night—I could go down on my knees, and kiss their feet whenever I turn my eyes on them. To me a woman is sweetest looking when she is nearest her time—like a ripe fruit. To be fruitful is better than to be sterile, isn't it? A field of heavy wheat, a woodful

of nesting birds, a street of mothers and daughters shopping in the afternoon—Sauchiehall Street, or Regent Street, Glasgow or London, country or city, I like life, and the joy of life, and the signs of it.”

“You speak like a god, John Inglis, an earth-god of flowers and fruits. Vertumnus, or one born under his star.

“‘*Jam mœchus Romæ jam mallet doctus Athenis Vivere.*’”

“Little Greek, and less Latin,” said Inglis, shaking his head. “What does it mean?”

“It means that you choose to be now a ship-broker in Glasgow, now a man of leisure in London, but always delighting in what is sweetest in life. That’s what it means, John Inglis.”

Inglis blushed with pleasure and looked very like his son; he was far too simple-minded to dream of any concealed despite lurking in the thoughts of this new admirer.

“Now I like that too,” said Inglis. “You call me John Inglis at once, and I feel as I never felt before how odious ‘mister’ is.”

The conversation was not interrupted by the service or the consumption of Baptist’s supper. Baptist was always ready with unimpeded utterance to take up the word when Inglis paused.

“‘Mister’ is a most loathsome word,” said Baptist. “Yet, with a different meaning, it smells sweet and rings with romance.

“‘The Rederosse Knight toward him crossèd fast,
To weet what mister wight was so dismayed.’”

“Yes,” said Inglis; “but I confess I can’t read Spenser.”

“Nor can I,” said Baptist. “A wonderful tutor of mine, or rather I should say, a helpless tutor of mine, in the clutch of our wonderful system of cram, made me commit to memory the three examples in Spenser of the use of ‘mister.’ I used to read bits of the ‘Faery Queene’ when I was a boy though.”

“Islay dreams over him.”

“Islay is a charming boy, a wonderful boy.”

“He is. Everybody, I imagine, would be very charming if they got their own way as Islay does.”

“Oh ! admirable ! A philosophical remark of the deepest significance. The great difficulty is to find out what really is one’s own way. Most people, I should say, never find it out ; and the few who do are too old when they make the discovery to benefit by it.”

“Yes, but there are some, I think, who take their own way without realising it. There are some men so happily constituted that they go straight through life obeying the law of their own beings as smoothly and cleanly as a wet knife cuts butter.”

“Good. But most men go through life like a saw through sandstone.”

“They do. I think I am one of those men who really never discover that they have a way of their own until after follow-

ing it for years. I was suddenly turned aside by a defeat in some paltry municipal ambition and got for a day into bad relations with myself. Then I perceived what a long pleasant course of my own I had followed, just as you never know you bear a brain until you have a touch of headache. Still, I really got my own way too—a sort of by-way—in coming to London. I always have a secondary plan independent of the will of others.”

“Aha!” said Baptist. “I wondered, now, when Islay said that about you, ‘he always has a second plan which does not depend on the will of others,’ if it were an inference of his own. Your son quotes you; he heeds you and understands you. It is a thing to be proud of. I envy you two, for my father and I are at daggers drawn.”

“I am so sorry for that,” said Inglis. “It is the commonest and most pitiful of all the ills of life, the quarrel between father and son. And it is always the father’s fault I maintain. If he has no natural

sympathy with his son, as is often the case, he should study him as he would any difficult problem that beset his career, until he finds out what the boy's own way is and can put him in it. They talk of the awful sufferings of cab horses, and the unutterable misery of thousands of little children in the dens of inhuman parents, but the anguish, seldom keen though always gnawing, of estrangement between fathers and sons—between all fathers and all sons, with the fewest exceptions—is to me the most heart-breaking of all woes. I can't contemplate it. And there is no remedy, for when the estrangement is remediable—most often I'm afraid it's not—the fathers will never understand that they, and not their sons, are the most to blame."

There were tears in Baptist's eyes, and a tremor in his voice as he replied.

"You speak home; you move me," he said. "My father, for what reason I never could learn, began before I had reached my teens to look askance at me. Since my

first year at school, he has never spoken to me ; since my twenty-first year I have never seen him. He refuses to have anything to do with me. Happily, I have an income from my mother. She died when I was quite a child. I barely remember her—tears, and soft eyes and caresses. But I must try and be reconciled to my father. I have never known what it means to have a father. The filial feeling is quite undeveloped. I am incomplete. It is most unfair to me that this experience should have been denied me ; it must be remedied. What do you think I should do, John Inglis ? Understand, I have not the least idea why my father hates me.”

“I know nothing you can do except marry and make him a grandfather.”

“Yes ; that is in the books. I shall think of it. But I must not marry yet.”

“Why not ? ”

“Oh, it is quite certain that I shall marry. I must know what it is to be a husband and a father ; but then it is equally certain that

I shall be unfaithful and ill-treat my wife—unless she is good enough to give me cause for divorce. And that is why I wait ; marriage brings in its train so many experiences. The heart requires either to be well seasoned or very new when one launches into matrimony.”

“ Oh,” said Inglis, “ you are only talking. You don’t mean to tell me that infidelity and divorce can have any attraction for a sound-hearted, sound-headed man ? ”

“ But they have—if I am sound-hearted and sound-headed, that is to say. Laws are made to be broken, don’t you know. It is only then that life becomes entertaining to the spectator. Ordinary law-breakers suffer and are not entertained. I have the extraordinary gift of being spectator and actor at once. It is incredible to the ordinary mind how a man can throw himself heart and soul into anything and enjoy the spectacle of it at the same time ; and it is really a miracle ; it is genius. Now there is nothing more entertaining than a

cause célèbre in the Divorce Court, absolutely nothing that so stirs curiosity and imagination. Consider the perfectly ravishing pleasure of being the centre of the talk and speculation of high and low, rich and poor; of suffering *with* yourself and enjoying the acute interest of the world *in* yourself, and your connection with those very human events, the contemplation of which arouses the keenest thoughts and feelings of all sorts and conditions of men. I shudder at the anticipation of such dreadful delight, and refrain from marriage. Ah! if it were not for the reign of law, life would be unendurable. Were you to abrogate marriage, to hew down the tree of knowledge of good and evil, the world would at once cut and plant a slip before a leaf had withered from the stem. Reasons many would be given for doing so, but the real reason, only known and confessed by a few celestial souls like you and me—a few well-born Calvinists—would simply be the desire to

restore the crop of forbidden fruit. We must have the tree of the knowledge of good and evil beside the tree of life. What boy cares for a playground unless there is a well-guarded orchard over the wall?"

"I am afraid I am not inferior enough—a sufficiently good Calvinist in this matter," said Inglis. "I have hardly ever thought about it. I love my wife and children."

"Ah! you will have adventures yet," rejoined Baptist; but as Inglis exhibited clearly his dislike for the turn the conversation had taken, Baptist changed the subject. "Then you really like London?" he said.

"Like it! I should think so—Saturdays and Sundays. Sunday in London is a special joy to a Scotchman, you know. The gay crowds, the music in the park, and the open public-houses. I have been in Paris and Brussels, and I can understand that to a Londoner who knows the Continental Sunday, a London Sunday is no treat; but

to me, with the gloomy Glasgow Sunday clogging my blood, it is like a plunge into the ocean, and all the more wonderful because it is not foreign."

"Vertumnus again," said Baptist.

"*Tuscus ego et Tuscis orior ; nec pœnitet inter
Pœlia Volsinos deseruisse focos.
Hæc me turba juvat ; nec templo lætor eburno ;
Romanum satis est posse videre forum.*"

Which means, being interpreted, 'Scotch am I, and with Scotch ways in my blood, and yet I am not ashamed of having forsaken the Broomielaw. The crowds and the music in the park please me of a Sunday. I have no desire to enter a Presbyterian church ; a look at the dome of St. Paul's is all I need.' But you ought not to attend the music in the Park on Sundays. These things have to be learned. Now I must go. I have had a most delightful evening. Let me see. We must meet soon again. Can you sup with me to-morrow night?"

"I think so. I have been living a sort of

bachelor's life for a month, and that will put a finish to it."

"Then we go to the Middle-class Club to-morrow night."

"Oh!" said John Inglis, with a new interest, "I've heard some rumour of that club. They tell strange stories of it."

"False, if they are discreditable."

"They talk of mysteries."

"Ah, yes; the club is so select — so private — none but middle-class people admitted even as guests. The Middle-class Club is the most brilliant social idea of the age. Do you know—you cannot know the history of it?"

"No."

"It is known only to members. Now, had it been an aristocratic secret, or a labour secret, it would have been blared from the housetops long ago. Ah! these successful middle-class people—above all, the middle-class women, with intellect, courage, and the need to be as wise as serpents, and as harmful on occasion—they will go far.

I shall tell you about the Middle-class Club before I go, as I think you ought to be a member. It was founded by Lord Hammersmith."

"Yes ; I remember hearing that. I once met Lord Hammersmith in Glasgow when he was Mr. Scrapiron."

"Yes ; well, it was before his elevation to the peerage that he founded the club. Like yourself, when he had made a fortune he gave up business and came to London—from Birmingham it was. Two years he fought prodigiously for standing room in the inner circle of Society ; but he soon found that to be well received in the best houses was nothing ; that he was no nearer the real inwardness of the matter than the footmen. He saw clearly that to be of Society consists in having a certain point of view, unattainable by a middle-class mind, even if it were Shakespeare's—a mental attitude inherited as a flower inherits its odour, and which may be made richer and subtler by culture, but which cannot

be acquired any more than a daisy can adopt the scent of a moss rose. So he gave up the struggle and said, or may have said, to himself: 'I am of the middle-class—a wilding, but of a strong and generous breed. Why should the middle-class not have their true inwardness also, develop an absolute point of view, and an inexpugnability of its own? Why should it go on destroying itself in an attempt to be Society? The land, capital, Government, are gradually becoming ours. Let us then dare to be ourselves, and make *our* manners the perfection of style, and *our* slang the essence of speech.' And so he founded the Middle-class Club. The membership consists of two hundred men and two hundred women—the women married or widows—and there are fifty associates, the sons of men who have accepted titles. I am only an associate, and that only by means of persevering intrigue, for the Lakes, of Pilgrimage, have unfortunately been baronets for a century nearly. When my father dies,

my connection with the Middle-class Club must cease entirely. The entrance fee is a thousand pounds for male members, and five hundred for ladies and associates; the annual subscription two hundred and one hundred pounds. Therefore, it is the selectest club in the world; and its effect has been wonderful. Already Society begins to grasp its significance. The upper five hundred are meeting in Carlton-house Terrace, at Ascot, in Scotch shooting-lodges, men and women with utterly unknown names, whose glance, when necessary, can meet theirs with even greater impassivity, and all degrees of indifference and scorn; who make no attempt to imitate their speech in accent or vocabulary; who have a different gait, a different manner, a different language; and all borne with such ease—so absolutely, that the tables are at last turned, and Society begins to be diffident in presence of the Middle-class. A decade of the Middle-class Club has done it all. Here are five

hundred men and women who say, 'We are the Middle-class, the cleverest, wealthiest people in London. We shall be, we are, the best set in London.' And immediately they become so. An individual couldn't have done it, ten people couldn't have done it; they would have been laughed down. But five hundred, all knowing each other, all playing into each other's hands, meeting in the same houses all the year round, with their club for Torres Vedras, have conquered the highest position in London. None except themselves quite realise it; but the feat has been accomplished, and it was old Scrapiron did it, with his pale, Disraelian face, his black eyes, and his bull-fighter's neck."

"Why did he take the title, then?" asked Inglis, with signs of incredulity that would not be hidden.

"Ah, it is a sad story. He married a second wife—a pretty, demure child of diplomacy, who laughed at his Middle-class Club and him the day she said, 'I will.'"

She was twenty, he was sixty. They have three children. Some time before the birth of the first child poor Scrapiron resigned his membership. Before the birth of the second child he was returned to Parliament for a metropolitan burgh in the Tory interest. His peerage accompanied the birth of his third child. Lady Hammersmith imagines she is in Society, and her photograph is in the Stereoscopic Company's windows."

"But is she not in Society, then?" asked Inglis.

"Oh, no! You forget we talk of the Upper five hundred—Society *in excelsis*. Their photographs never appear in any window; they fall from their estate if they are tempted into Parliament, or office of any kind; they speak to Royalty when they see it, but do not admit it to any terms of familiarity. These five hundred are—were—the salt of the earth. They are losing their savour; but old Scrapiron has provided wherewith the land shall be salted.

The Middle-class Club is the salvation of England. Democracy strains and struggles, and the upper classes shake in their shoes; but as long as the Middle-class Club exists the country is safe. For ten middle-class people the cities of the plain would have been spared; with five hundred, surely England will not be overthrown."

"Astonishing," said Inglis, who did not know what to make of the seeming sincerity of Baptist's manner.

"Now, you will sup with me at the Middle-class Club to-morrow night, won't you?"

"I will, indeed, with great pleasure."

And so it was arranged that Baptist Lake should call on Sunday night at half-past ten, and carry off John Inglis to put a finish to his bachelor life.

VII.

ON leaving Whitgroom's Baptist walked to his own hotel, Applegarth's, in Piccadilly, changed his dress, ordered a hansom, and drove to a house in Ringmere Street. Baptist seldom rose before five o'clock in the evening; there were still some four or five hours of his waking time to be spent. He always *spent* his time, permitting neither routine nor habit to wear those holes in his days through which golden opportunities slip away like sovereigns through a ragged pocket.

The Ringmere Street house showed all dark without, and by an arrangement of curtains not the faintest beam of light was emitted when the door opened to Baptist's initiated knock. But the marble-paved hall, and wide staircase, panelled with leopard-skins, were lit with electricity in

crimson cups like Sangrails. Two negroes in crimson and gold took Baptist's coat and hat, and a third of gigantic stature ushered him into a room on the *entresol*—a room cool and fragrant like a sea-cave. It was draped in violet, with small electric lights, like silver stars, here and there in the hangings and curtains, and in the violet ceiling. The carpet was of violet velvet without a thread of other colour; irregular bars of white silk were woven into the violet velvet of the ottomans. There were no chairs. A number of little silver-topped tables were grouped about the ottomans. This was the lounge of the Middle-class Club, called by the members the "violet room." It was upholstered freshly every month.

Six people were in the room, four drinking coffee out of semi-transparent china cups; the other two sipped a straw-coloured wine from crystal glasses shaped like gladioli.

Baptist reclined on one of the ottomans, and in a second or two a servant brought him a glass of the pale gold wine, the Middle-

class Club hock, grown by the Middle-class Club in its own proper vineyards on the Rhine. No champagne was allowed within the doors of the house in Ringmere Street, and no member of the Middle-class Club was ever supposed to drink old wine. The latter custom arose from a saying of old Scrapiron's, when a difficulty arose about stocking the wine-cellar. The best wine was already, of course, in the cellars of the upper five hundred. "Ah," said Scrapiron, "old wine for old bottles and old bottle-noses. We are the new bottles ; we shall have new wine only." His poor jest soon became a principle. "We are the Middle-class," the club said, "the cleverest, wealthiest people in London. If we say new wine is best it is best." Straightway the Middle-class Club found that the supposed superiority of old wine was a superstition as absurd as the efficacy of a royal finger for the cure of scrofula. In a similar manner they discovered the miserable quality of champagne. It was

impossible to obtain a supply of the true vintage; it was the choice wine of the upper five hundred. The Middle-class Club said, "In twenty years' time people will wonder as much why they drank champagne as why their ancestors ate whale." The Middle-class Club had vineyards of its own in many of the wine districts of Europe (not in Champagne, of course; they tried, for, after all, the grapes were sour), and as the new crops arrived, the remnant of last season's vintage, amounting every year to several thousand bottles, was presented to the London Hospitals.

Near Baptist were the other wine-drinkers—two ladies. Baptist sipped his glass and addressed the elder of them.

"Julia Cakebread," he said—she was a woman of forty, strong-featured but comely, dressed in yellow silk; the wife of a retired coal-merchant—"Julia Cakebread, have you ever thought how unlike everything is to itself?"

"No, Baptist," said Mrs. Cakebread; "not

that I remember. John Cakebread, for example, the man I know best, is always like himself."

"I think people must be very unlike themselves, too," said Baptist. "But I had rooms in my mind. I have been in this room hundreds of times. To-night it seems to me as if I had never been here before. Either the room is at this moment very unlike itself, or it is itself to-night for the first time."

"I know what you mean," said Mrs. Cakebread. "I remember a room I had known for years astonishing me in that way once. I became as conscious of its shape, its height, and the things in it, as if it had been alive and beckoning me."

"Yes," said Baptist. "It snatched a soul for a moment from the infinite, as this did just now. It has lost it again; it is simply the violet room. . . ."

"Is Alice Meldrum here, to-night?" asked Baptist, after a pause.

"She was here half-an-hour ago. I believe she went to the writing-room."

“Can you sup with her and me and a wonderful new Scotchman to-morrow night?”

“Yes, I can. Eleven?”

“Eleven.”

“Is the Scotchman really good?”

“A wonderful temperament — robust, yet exquisite. I must try and secure Alice. Good morning.”

“Good morning.”

The writing-room opened off the hall, opposite the lounge. Alice Meldrum, seated at a table, was its only occupant when Baptist entered. Except for a small burner in the roof, no more than sufficient to guide one among the chairs and tables, the only light in the room was the shaded glow of the writing-lamp which fell on Mrs. Meldrum's face and bosom, and on her arms and hands, and the letter which lay half-written before her. Baptist's step was inaudible on the plush carpet, and he watched her perplexed face for fully a minute in silence. Then he advanced into

the room and took a table adjoining hers. Alice Meldrum was so pre-occupied that she did not notice the intentional noise he made in seating himself ; it was only when he turned on the light belonging to his table that she became aware of his presence.

“Baptist Lake !” she exclaimed, annoyed rather than startled. “Why did you steal in so quietly ?”

“You were too intensely interested to notice my entrance. I want you to sup with me to-morrow night, Alice. Can you ?”

“I’m afraid not,” she replied, tapping the table with the end of her pen.

“I wish you would,” said Baptist ; “but I have interrupted you. Finish your letter and then we can talk. I have a letter to write too.”

Alice Meldrum, a widow of three years’ standing, wore a black lace dress, which fitted her of course, and showed the beauty of her pale complexion, but which looked

and was of inferior quality. Her large grey eyes, with pupils that filled the whole iris, and her red mouth, lit up the pallor of her face, a perfect oval. Her rounded cheeks and her smooth low brow were, indeed, deathlike, but her eyes announced a soul of some sort, and her lips said that she had not yet, by any means, put off mortality. Her dead-black hair, divided in the middle, shaped her brow, and was coiled heavily on the back of her head. Doubtless she was a woman who could enthrall almost any man, and the deep perplexity in her expression gave her face a melodramatic charm which a lover would have found tragic.

“I can’t write,” said Baptist, throwing down his pen—he had had no intention of doing so—“nor can you, Alice. Can I help you? You are in some great difficulty.”

Alice Meldrum threw down her pen also.

“You have taken me at the psychological moment, as their dreadful jargon

goes," she said, clasping her hands, while drops of pearly sweat appeared on her brow.

"Tell me," said Baptist, leaning towards her like a reservoir of sympathy, "Is it this dreadful money again?"

"Yes," said Alice Meldrum. "I am beaten to my knees,"

"But that will soon be over when you marry George Sleaper."

"George Sleaper was married this morning to Mademoiselle Blanchatre."

"Impossible! Why, she is ugly. And he loses his membership, having married an actress."

"She wooed him with open breast and stage caresses," said Alice Meldrum.

"Which, of course, you couldn't do."

Alice Meldrum smiled disdain.

"Ah!" thought Baptist, "I have done too much to-day. My mind has lost its fineness."

"You might sup with me to-morrow night," he said again. "I have asked Julia

Cakebread, and a new Scotchman of force and high quality."

"Is he rich?"

"Yes."

"Is he unmarried?"

"Yes," said Baptist, unhesitatingly.

"Couldn't you marry me yourself, Baptist—after all?"

"I?" said Baptist, in his most dulcet tones. "I have broken your heart already. My wife must be heart-whole."

"When will you cease breaking your toys?"

"It is well said. I am satisfied with nothing until I have broken it. A man like me should have a dispensation to shed blood, to poison at his own sweet will. The pleasure I would have in killing people who had become tiresome to me would transcend the whole life's enjoyment of an entire generation of the English-speaking races."

"Yes, I could kill too," said Mrs. Meldrum.
"And perhaps I shall, if I ever tire of life."

“You mean me?”

“Yes.”

“Then I shall live to tip your grand-child.”

“*Assez.* I have a new frock ready at Madame Hortense’s, but I owe her a hundred pounds—my smallest debt to a dressmaker, in London at least. She has refused to deliver it for a fortnight now. My subscription here has been due for six months; if it is not paid in a week I am to be posted. I cannot sup with you to-morrow night unless you can give me three hundred pounds. I wish to look my best and must have peace of mind.”

“You shall have the money in half-an-hour,” said Baptist rising. “But can you get your frock to-morrow—to-day, Sunday?”

“If I should have to break open Madame’s door. She lives above her shop.”

“In half-an-hour,” said Baptist.

“I was writing to—no matter whom,”

said Mrs. Meldrum with a shudder, tearing up her unfinished letter. "May I have some supper?" she added, following Baptist to the door. "I have had nothing to eat all day. I haven't a penny."

Baptist gave her the ten sovereigns he had received from Mrs. Tiplady.

VIII.

ISLAY INGLIS walked into Pilgrimstow about nine on Sunday morning, and a fine morning it was, with a fresh breeze, a clear blue sky, and the whole-hearted midsummer sun. There was hardly anybody stirring in the streets. Late milkmen passed him with jangling cans or rattling carts, a few Salvationists on errands of their own, and one or two early pleasure-seekers sauntering about until the busses should begin, or hurrying to railway-stations. Mrs. Macalister, in a wrapper and curl-papers, was opening the door of Salerne's shop when Islay arrived.

"Good morning, Mrs. Macalister," he said, in great spirits, after his tramp from London.

"Ay, it's a fine mornin'," replied Mrs. Macalister; but there was no response in

her voice or her look to Islay's glowing cheeks and sparkling eyes. On the contrary, Mrs. Macalister had a very gloomy and dismayed appearance. Islay noticed her distress, and asked what was the matter.

"Oh, naething," said Mrs. Macalister. "It's the Lord's Day, that's a'."

"Don't you like Sunday in London, then?" asked Islay, who shared his father's sympathy with the English Sabbath-breakers.

"Me like it! It's jist awfu'," said Mrs. Macalister. "Soadum an' Gamorrey! Soadum an' Gamorrey! I've been here the feck o' a year; but I'll ne'er agree wi't. There's a maist awfu' jidgment comin'. But gang in owre."

Islay entered the shop, followed by the prophetic Mrs. Macalister, and asked if he might go to the parlour.

"'Deed ye'll no'," said she. "Breakfast's no' jist ready, an' they're no' doon either. Tak' a seat."

Islay took the only chair in the shop, and Mrs. Macalister took a pinch of snuff from the silver-mounted ram's horn.

"Ye'll won'er maybe," she said, "what way I stay on here, an' me sae ill-pleased wi' thae' Sunday on-gaun's."

"Well," said Islay, "if I thought that London were in danger of immediate destruction by fire and brimstone, I think I should take an early train for the north."

"Would ye?" said Mrs. Macalister, rubbing her nose where the bone shone through, and winking her big sunken eyes. "An' what about Rose?"

"Oh! I would take her with me."

"Jist so, ye see. But I canna' dae that. I'm a' the mother Rose has had since long afore she put aff short frocks, an' I canna' leave her, an' I canna' take her. But it's an awfu' way o' daein'. As sure's death, I canna' get slepp on Saturday nights, for thinkin' o' the Sunday, for as lang's I've been here. The croods o' misleared lads an' laddies, an' women wi' cleckans o'

weans, sweatin'—an' swearin' some o' them —an' runnin' up an' doon cars an' busses, on ladders, for a' the warl' like the riggin' o' a ship, as bauld as ye like. An' the men —be gude tae us!—buyin' tabaccy an' seegaurs wi'oot a blush, an' birlin' awa' the siller in the public-hooses as if it was Glesca' fair. I tell ye, the first Sunday I was here I hid mysel' under the blankets half the day, like my auntie when the thun'er cam'. I'll ha'e nae peace o' mind noo' till twal' o'clock strikes an' it's the morn."

Mrs. Macalister rapped the ram's horn and took a second pinch of snuff with vehement inhalation. Then she rushed like a gust of wind into the back premises, exclaiming, "Losh keep me! thae eggs 'll be hard-biled."

"No," she said, re-entering the shop. "They're done to a turn. I ken by the way they dried."

She had a bowlful of wet tea-leaves in her hand, and proceeded to scatter its

contents over the linoleum-covered floor, preparatory to sweeping.

“There’s that Rose an’ Croon,” she said, “no’ a hun’er miles frae here, an’ Mrs. Tipleddy or Tippleleddy, or whatever they ca’ the alewife. If it wasna’ for that I would run awa’ efter a’. Twa black’s dinna’ mak’ a white, I ken weel, but a public-hoose is a hantle blacker than a tabaccy-shop; an’ whatever’s done tae us it’ll no’ be ill tae thole gin we’re alloosed tae see them daelin’ oot tae Mrs. Tiptapleddy the tiptap scoutherin’ she’s earn’t a’ her days, forbye Sundays—her an’ that limmer Florrie.”

“What’s wrong with Florrie, Mrs. Macalister.”

“A’thing. For impidence, doonricht cheek, an’ fair wicked pleasure in thrawin’ folk, she hasna’ her match, no’ in the High Street o’ Glasca’ nor yet in Stockwa’l. I’ve nae patience wi’ her. But there’s them comin’. Awa’ ben.”

There were two doors, entering from the

house to the shop. By one of these Mrs. Macalister vanished into the kitchen; by the other, Islay found his way into the parlour, on the threshold of which he met Rose Salerne. Behind her on the stair that led to the bedrooms came her father. He hailed Islay, and the three were soon seated at table. In several gusts, Mrs. Macalister blew in from the kitchen with a brown earthenware teapot, a large rack of toast, a plentiful supply of rashers of bacon and a nest of boiled eggs. She then surveyed the scene rapidly, nodding her head as she counted the dishes and the people, and in a final tempest, running her short steps into a lightning-like slide, blew out and in with a plate, a salt-cellar, and a teaspoon, required to complete her mathematical arrangements. Then was heard a whirlwind in the shop, as she plied her broom, and after that she sank to rest for a time.

Very little was said by the young people. They had not spoken when they met; their

hands and eyes had told more than their tongues could have uttered; and they had almost no need to talk, even if there had not been the restraint of Paul Salerne's presence, for their feet touched under the table.

"Well," said Salerne, breaking a silence of several minutes, "well Rosey, what are you going to do to-day?"

"I don't know father; but you're not going away till the afternoon?"

"Our train's at half past two," said Salerne. "So you've got from then till bedtime to put in alone, for we won't be back till to-morrow—at least, I don't think we can."

"Oh," said Rosey, "I'll read. I've just begun 'Quentin Durward'. I'll read it till nine, and then I'll go to bed."

Islay pressed her foot; it was he who had started her on Sir Walter Scott.

"That's a good girl," said Salerne.

"Won't you tell us now," asked Islay, "what kind of adventure we are going on?"

"No," said Salerne. "Half the pleasure of an adventure—you said it yourself—is in its unexpectedness. I shouldna' have even told you that we're going on one."

There was again a silence of several minutes. Salerne was preoccupied. His dreamy blue eyes looked out across the table—across the sea, and he drew his fingers often through his silky beard.

"Good morning, ma'am," in a shrill young voice, came suddenly from the shop.

Ordinary tones uttered in the shop were quite audible in the parlour, if the door of either apartment happened to be open. On this morning, Mrs. Macalister had left the parlour door ajar and the shop door, opposite, wide to the wall; but even without these facilities, the talking in the shop soon grew so loud that it would have reached the parlour through a greater impediment than the thin partitions of a suburban building.

"That's Mrs. Tiplady's Florrie," said Salerne.

“There’ll be a passage of arms then,” said Islay. “Mrs. Macalister has an ill-will to her.”

“And Florrie,” said Rose, “delights in tormenting Mrs. Macalister. Listen.”

Mrs. Macalister, resorting mechanically to the silver-mounted ram’s horn, had returned Florrie’s salutation with dry civility, and Florrie had rejoined with a remark about the weather.

“Yes,” said Mrs. Macalister, who, when she liked, could speak what she called English, “it is fyne. But I wonduh sometymes if God is not afryed to send such lovelly weathuh to tempt people into bryekingg His Holy Dye.”

“’Ow bootiful !” exclaimed Florrie. “You talk like a duchess and a harch-bishop all in one, you do.”

“If some people,” retorted Mrs. Macalister, “would think maur of their own speakingg and less of others’, they might learun in caurse of tyme that aitch belongs to some words and not to others.”

“’Oo’s droppin’ haitches?” cried Florrie thoroughly angry, to the surprise and delight of Mrs. Macalister, who had never before got quite the better of the barmaid’s easy impudence. “’Ere Scotchey, wot d’yer mean? Talk to me wi’ them screws o’ tobaccy in yer ’air—snuffy!”

Florrie’s wrath was a great triumph for Mrs. Macalister. She winced a little at the reference to her curl-papers, but the allusion to her snuffing braced her for the combat. With a most severe countenance and a snort of defiance, she inhaled an extra large pinch from the ram’s horn, and blinked at Florrie out of her cavernous grey eyes.

“Haitches!” exclaimed Florrie, still red with anger. “I’ll make you a present of all the haitches I drop.”

“Thank you,” said Mrs. Macalister; “but they wouldn’t buy all those you misplyce.”

“’Ere, w’en yer goin’ to open school?” asked Florrie, always mistress of herself

when a jest occurred to her. "Speakin' with the use of haitches an' the globes taught 'ere by the fust class Scotch school-marm, sixpence a' hour, no extries for spankin'. Ho! I say, you should go on the slangs, you should—the champion female snuffer as never dropped a haitch. You'd look lovely in them dried cork-screws, a kissin' of yer 'and, an' kickin' up yer 'eels in short flounces an' tartan tights."

Florrie laughed loud at the image her own words called up, and before Mrs. Macalister could reply delivered the message which was the cause of her visit.

"Mrs. Tiplady's compliments to Mr. and Miss Salerne and Mr. Inglis, an' will they lunch with her at twelve?"

Mrs. Macalister took no notice of the invitation. "Tartan tights," she muttered; "tartan tights." Then suddenly stretching out her hand with the quivering forefinger extended, she shook it at Florrie, and discharged a volley of Scotch in a frenzied tone, eyes glowering, body shaking, her

whole being bent on the perdition of her opponent.

“Ye randy,” she cried. “When that ill-scrapit tongue o’ yours is danglin’ oot o’ the cracklin’ o’ yer rizzert mou’ like a coalie dug’s, an’ you an’ Mrs. Tippleleddy’s sittin’ on yer hunkers, groanin’ for a drap watter, an’ auld Niekie Ben pullin’ awa’ at the brimstane-tap, wi’ nae ‘mild or bitter’ aboot it, but jist ‘here, doon wi’t,’ pint efter pint, scandin’ het, it’ll come intae yer mind when ye’re se’rt wi’ a spaecial drap that rives yer boesum an’ gars yer ‘een reel like a sicht o’ green cheese, ‘This is for lauchin’ at a daecent Scotch bodie that only keepit a tabaccy-shop an’ me a barmaid!’ Tartan tichts! Ye’ll hae tartan tichts wi’ a vengeance, when ye’re skelpt an’ scored frae tap tae tae wi’ the de’il’s cat-o-nine tails. It’ll be casten up tae ye, that it wull, ye ill-faured, towsy limmer! Awa’ wi’ ye! Get oot o’ my sicht!”

Florrie muttered something, but her

light nature was quite cowed by the deep-seated anger she had stirred up so unexpectedly, and in part by the incomprehensible speech she had heard. She hung on her toe a moment and then left the shop.

As soon as she had gone, Mrs. Macalister folded her arms, threw back her head, and walked with her short quick steps—she seemed never to bend her knees—straight out into the middle of the street and back again, like a wagtail on a lawn. She looked neither to the right hand nor to the left, until she found herself beside the ram's horn, when she celebrated her triumph with two double pinches of her favourite Taddy.

“Florrie brought a message, didn't she?” said Salerne, stepping into the shop.

“Yes, sir,” replied Mrs. Macalister, quite tranquilly, and employing her English pronunciation. “Mrs. Tiplady's compliments and will Mr. and Miss Salerne and Mr. Inglis lunch with her to-dye at twelve?”

“Has the messenger gone?” asked Salerne, a gleam passing across his eyes.

“She went awye in a hurry,” said Mrs. Macalister. “Something seemed to stryke her.”

“Then you sent no answer?”

“How could I, when she would not wyte. But I can tyke the answuh,” said Mrs. Macalister alertly, scenting the battle again.

“No, I shall go myself,” said Salerne.

He told the young people to be punctual at Mrs. Tiplady’s, gave a few instructions to Mrs. Macalister, and went over to the “Rose and Crown.”

IX.

MRS. TIPLADY sat in her parlour counting up her money, the breakfast things being pushed to one side to make room for a bank-book, a cheque-book, etc.; and no landlady could have looked better. Her comely face was wreathed in smiles; and her small, grey eyes, shrewd and satisfied, glanced up and down columns of figures.

Her stiff, black silk dress, with sprays and cascades of black beads, rustled and clicked, as she scribbled little multiplications and divisions on the back of an old letter. Salerne kissed her rosy cheek and her small, muscular mouth, and she stroked his hair softly and gave his beard a little pull.

“My treasure,” she whispered, with a break of pleasure in her voice.

Salerne pulled a chair close to hers, and

with his arm round her waist watched her making her calculations. They were soon complete.

“Three thousand four hundred and sixty pounds,” she said, dropping her pencil, and giving her hand to Salerne. “You had no idea I was so rich, had you?”

“No! we can leave England now, surely?”

“We can, my blessing. As soon as ever you like—before another week.”

“It wouldn’t do to be too sudden.”

“No,” said Mrs. Tiplady, rising from her chair, and plumping down on the viking’s knee, “’twouldn’t.”

“But where got ye all this money, Jane?” asked Salerne.

“Where I got the rest—from old Sir Harry. He gave it me, he said, instead of leaving it. I’m the only friend he has, and he’s so grateful is old Sir Harry.”

“But you’ve five or six—nearly seven hundred pounds more this week than you had last week.”

“Of course I have. He began asking me how I was getting along—if I wasn’t thinkin’ of marryin’ again; and I out with the whole story to him; how I loved a handsome sailor as had made up his mind to go and settle in America, and buy a fine bit o’ land as he knew there and cows and sheep and himplements, and we was waitin’ till we had made up three thousand. I tells him it was the desire of our hearts, and you as impatient as a duke, and I couldn’t tell what you mightn’t do. So he give me seven hundred pounds there and then, and his blessin’, and he was sorry, for I was the only friend he had, but he wouldn’t stand in the way of any woman’s ’appiness. So like old Sir Harry.”

“He must be a very good sort,” said Salerne. “This’ll be my last visit to Belminster, then?” he added.

“It will, my blessing. You can marry me, Paul, on Wednesday. First, on Monday, I’ll see my cousin Kate, who’ll take charge here and sell the business for

me when we're gone. And she'll drive a bargain, will Kate. You take a state cabin for Friday, and we'll spend our honeymoon on the Atlantic, singin' :

“ ‘ Rule Britannia, Britannia rules the waves !

Britons never, never, never

Shall be mair-i-ed

To a merma-id

At the bottom of the deep, deep sea.’ ”

Mrs. Tiplady sang these charming lines in a pleasant undertone. Skipping off Salerne's knee, and lifting her dress sufficiently to show a trim foot with a good instep and neat ankle, she accompanied her snatch of song with a few steps danced as lightly as though she had not been a plump landlady of forty-five ; then she returned to her viking's knee like a bird to her perch.

Salerne was infatuated about her. He had been a sailor until the death of his wife, many years before the date of our story. He loved the sea. When he stowed away

as a boy, it had not been simply to escape the restraint of home and in expectation of exciting adventures and a speedy fortune. He never had been a reader ; like all sailors, he knew a little of Byron, but had no acquaintance with even the cheapest piratical literature. Born at Belminster, quaintest of Sussex sea-coast towns, where his father had been a boat-builder, the wind and the waves got into his blood, and he went to sea as a drowsy child goes to bed. His mind was in a perpetual doze. The death of his wife wakened him briefly to a keener life than he had ever known ; but as soon as he had determined to stay on land for the sake of his little Rose, whom he loved even better than the sea, he became again like one enchanted. He settled in Glasgow. It was there that his wife had died, while on a visit to him on his return from a voyage to Melbourne ; and her grave was there in Sighthill Cemetery—most lugubrious of all burying-places. Work was found for him

at the docks. He became a stevedore, soon with a gang of men under him, in the employment of the firm of which John Inglis was at the time the principal partner. He worked like an automaton, faithfully and well, for over a dozen years, when he suddenly left London and turned up at Pilgrimstow as a tobacconist. In Pilgrimstow, Mrs. Tiplady simply took possession of him. People wondered what might be between them, because he had stayed with her during the preparation of a house and shop for the advent of his daughter and Mrs. Macalister ; and all kinds of things were whispered. But when at last it was known that Mrs. Tiplady and he were engaged to be married, it was finally settled that he and she had been sweet-hearts when they were children.

For an hour and more, Mrs. Tiplady entertained Salerne with gossip—light, if a little muddy, like the froth of porter—with bits and bobs of music-hall songs and step-dances, and with caresses brief and bird-

like—the wariest of landladies, deep in love with her viking as she was. She had had no children by her first husband, and there was a dim feeling of maternity in her affection for Salerne; although he was as old as herself, much in her treatment of him resembled the cajoleries that sometimes pass between a mother, if she be still young, and her grown-up son. And sometimes she hugged him and hushed him, and bestowed unnecessary pity upon him—unnecessary except in so far as he was in her bonds—like a girl with her first doll; and Salerne was as subservient to her in most things as if he had been a doll.

“And now Paul,” she said at length, “what is to be done with Rose?”

“Ay,” answered Salerne, “what about Rose?”

“She will have to do something.”

“Yes.”

“I mean, something for a living.”

“That she’ll never do while I live,” said Salerne quietly.

Mrs. Tiplady's muscular mouth grew very tight, and a look came into her little eyes, which Salerne noticed, but hardly even wondered at—still less did he detect the malice in it—Mrs. Tiplady's expression had changed so often in the course of the morning.

“You ain't going to take her with us?” she said.

“No, Janey; I've a better plan than that.”

“What is it, my treasure?”

“You'll never guess.”

“Never,” said Mrs. Tiplady.

“Islay Inglis'll marry Rose the day I marry you.”

Mrs. Tiplady bounded from Salerne's knee, the very picture of astonishment.

“Islay Inglis!” she cried. “He ain't seventeen yet.”

“No matter. He's to marry Rose. I couldn't do better for Rose than that. Islay is the only son of his father, and he can do what he likes with his people.

When he came stepping into my shop three weeks ago, and I found out who he was, and saw him falling in love with Rosey, I tell ye, Jane, I thought God had sent him. At first I thought it was a dream. But it's all meant; it's foreordained Jane, as they used to say in Glasgow. Just as it was foreordained that I was to meet your grandfather, and come staggering away down south frae honest employment, to get into such a pitifu' mess that I'm fain to flee the country."

"My treasure! There's no mess yet," said Mrs. Tiplady. "Islay Inglis shall marry Rose, and away we go with light hearts. But are you sure he means honourable by her? *Will* he marry her on Wednesday?"

"And proud to do it."

"I'm so glad," said Mrs. Tiplady, looking in spite of her efforts to the contrary anything but overjoyed. "I thought he was foolin' her."

"The man that would try to fool Rosey——"

“Might as well try to fool your little Janey—eh, my blessing?”

“Yes,” replied Salerne slowly.

“I love Rose,” said Mrs. Tiplady. “When a woman loves a man, she loves his daughter by his first wife excruciatin’, don’t she?”

“Not always,” said Salerne looking uncomfortable.

“My treasure and goose, that’s wit what I said.”

“Maybe.”

“My poor dear,” murmured Mrs. Tiplady at Salerne’s ear, in a burst of soothing pity, as she seated herself on his knee again, “never mind when I say witty things. The more you don’t understand them the wittier they are, and the prouder you should be of your little Janey. An’ she never says ’em to bother her own Pretty Poll”—this was her pet name for Salerne — “but just because she can’t help it when her brainy-painies boils over. An’ I’ll teach my Pretty Polly how to do it too. Goodness

an' mercy! It's so easy. You just say what's not the case, and that's wit. Now I'll give you a lesson, dear. I'll say a thing straight, and you'll put it into wit. Hark to me, my angel! This is what I say."

"Well?"

"This: A man's wife is his better half. Put that into wit."

"A man's wife is his better half? But it is wit already," said Salerne innocently. "It's not the case."

"Now, that's very good," rejoined Mrs. Tiplady, surprised and delighted, as a girl might have been if her doll had suddenly developed a capacity for making faces. "That's a kind of wit too; that's what's called rappartee. My kind of wit has another name I never could remember, till I thought of an umbrella, then of a parasol—which it was all the better as they can be turned outside in—and it's name is paradox. If I say 'England expects that hevery man this day will do his duty,' that's straight. But if I say 'There ain't no

such thing as duty, therefore blessed be England as expected nothing and couldn't be disappointed,' that's a paradox."

"I see," said Salerne, smiling vaguely.

"Now then, put this into wit. 'There's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip.'"

"Well, you know," rejoined the viking, scratching his head; "seems to me there's a lot o' truth in that. You can't just turn it the other way about. How does this do? 'There isn't many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip; one's about enough as a rule.'"

"Not bad," said Mrs. Tiplady. "I had another way to turn it, but I believe yours is best. But it ain't wit; you didn't half think it was wit when you said it; and it's only wit when you intend it, and make it up. There aint no wit in bein' killed in a railway accident, but there's wit in shootin' yourself, as it were; that's my meaning."

"What fools coroners' juries must be then, making it out that it's want of wit that's wrong with suicides!"

"Now, that's sarcastic," said Mrs. Tiplady, "which is another kind of wit. Why you're as witty as me without knowing it, which is just the same as if you wasn't witty, you know." With which reassuring remark she kissed her innocent and abashed viking.

She had hardly time to skip off his knee after a knock at the door, when Florrie announced Islay and Rose.

"Goodness and mercy!" exclaimed Mrs. Tiplady, making a great fuss. "Is it that time already? I declare I hear Rebecca setting the table. Why it's five minutes to twelve. How the time has passed! And where have you been, my dears?"

"Along the Enfield road a bit," replied Islay.

"We watched the fish in the New River for a while," said Rose in her quiet, more or less irrelevant, way."

"Oh! that New River!" cried Mrs. Tiplady, with a reminiscence of Baptist Lake. "Why don't they join it with the

sea somehow, and have salmon and 'addock in it? Why it's a shame to be seen!—so plain, you know. How easy it would be to make it beautiful, with lamps along it, and crowds o' people—a reg'lar street it might be if they liked."

Mrs. Tiplady's remarks were not received with much favour by Islay, to whom they were specially addressed, and she herself felt that she had not quite hit it off.

"Well," she said, "it don't matter. Come, Paul."

Salerne gave her his arm, and Rose took Islay's. They crossed one passage, turned along another, and went down a few steps into Mrs. Tiplady's best room, where a leg of lamb, with peas and new potatoes, and bottles of beer and a jug of claret, crowned the board.

Mrs. Tiplady did nearly all the talking. She chattered of many things, and made frequent witty remarks in her own peculiar style, at which Islay was more amazed than amused, and at which Salerne smiled

vaguely as was his wont. Rose, dressed in a biscuit-coloured holland gown, that smelt as fresh as the morning, with the most beautiful crimson blushes mounting in her cheeks, the combined result of her walk and of the claret with which Mrs. Tiplady plied her, looked at everybody very sweetly, and kept of course her sweetest looks, which were in the majority, for Islay. A gooseberry tart followed the leg of lamb. While they were engaged on it, the sky began to be overcast, and Mrs. Tiplady was afraid of rain.

“There’s a thunder-shower coming,” said Salerne ; and sure enough a flash and peal was soon followed by big sparse drops, which gradually thickened into a down-pour. There was no more thunder, however.

“Well, that keeps you prisoners,” said Mrs. Tiplady to the young folk, who had thought of taking another stroll before the time arrived for Islay to start on his adventure with Salerne. “Poor dears !”

she added. "But you can stay here, and have the room entirely to yourselves. We can go back to the parlour, Paul."

The arrangement was quite agreeable to Salerne, and when Rebecca, the well-groomed maid of all work—Mrs. Tiplady's underlings were all clean and tidy, and kept well in hand—had removed the cloth, and turned up the pedestal table, and pushed it to one side (a twofold act by which Mrs. Tiplady's best apartment changed in a trice from a dining-room to a drawing-room) Islay and Rose were left to their own devices, with a piano and some old bound volumes of illustrated papers.

When they found themselves alone, they watched the rain together for a little while. The bay-window of Mrs. Tiplady's best room looked out on a bowling-green surrounded by seats and rustic tables, and with half-a-dozen dingy arbours on one side for the accommodation of customers who preferred, weather permitting, to

drink their beer in the open air. Dilapidated stucco figures of fauns, and draped and undraped creatures intended to seem "female of sex," stood on little rockeries and pedestals of painted wood, and gave the place a mingled air of decay and unreality, like a stage scene viewed in daylight. About a dozen old lime-trees grew round the enclosure, and took a little from the depressing vulgarity.

"Come and play something," said Islay, moving away from the window in disgust.

Rose Salerne, nothing loth, went to the piano and rattled off some "Sparkling Dewdrops," and "Marches of Halberdiers," and other school-girl *morceaux*, much to her own satisfaction and to Islay's, who never ceased adoring his sweetheart, and everything she did. It was to him an endless source of wonder that she should do anything at all; it seemed enough, being so lovely, that she should simply be.

"How charming, my dear!" said Mrs. Tiplady coming into the room. "But I

must ask you to stop playing. It's just one o'clock, and as soon as the doors are open, in they come you know. If they heard music, they'd start singing and dancing, which I can't abide—on Sundays, too, of all things. Here's a picture-book for you, better than those old papers. Now you have a full hour to yourselves, my dears, and nobody won't molest you, for I'll lock the door. This room always has to be locked, when the shop's open. It's easy to get at, and people used to wander into it often of a Sunday with their dirty boots, smoking and spitting, confound them. There's a saying I've heard, 'Love laughs at locksmiths' — but not in mockery—eh, my dears!—when the lovers are locked in together."

The end of the last sentence was uttered in the passage as Mrs. Tiplady locked the door of her best apartment on the outside, and took the key away with her.

Mrs. Tiplady's passionate attachment to Salerne was equalled in intensity by her

hatred of his daughter. Rose she knew divided his heart, and represented the summer of his life. Mrs. Tiplady was devoured with jealousy of the dead woman who had been Salerne's first love. Salerne's former marriage would have given her no more concern than hers gave him, had it not been that Rose made it such an actuality. She used to say to herself musing over her account-books, or waiting for custom in her private bar, "There's no Rose without a thorn, and my thorn's a Rose." Salerne and she had never spoken of Rose until that day, both having avoided an inevitable subject, which might create disagreement, until its discussion could no longer be put off. Mrs. Tiplady had at first determined in her own mind that Rose should be sent to service, but the appearance of Islay Inglis on the scene brought other thoughts. A vision of Rose at night on a London pavement, rouged and powdered, loitering about a lamp-post in the rain, solaced her vicious hate; in her

imagination there could be no other conclusion to a love affair between a wealthy merchant's boy, and the girl of a suburban tobacconist. She had been well pleased with Salerne's simplicity in the matter—it was a good augury for her own future happiness; but that morning's revelation of what she looked upon as a very deep-laid though ingenuous plot, had dashed her hopes of vengeance for Salerne's former marriage. The idea of Rose the wife of a rich man, happy, and her superior, was unendurable. The accident of the rain's keeping them in the house gave her, she thought, a last opportunity to destroy the innocence of the lovers; and blindly she took advantage of it. She shut her eyes to the possible marriage of Wednesday. Rose might be ruined yet, and loiter, rouged and powdered, about that lamp-post in the rain.

It was a New York edition of Byron, with an illustration on almost every page, that Mrs. Tiplady had given to Islay Inglis.

The book, once the property of the late unlamented Tiplady, and the companion of his idle hours during some three or four years of stewardship on an Atlantic liner, opened at a well-thumbed passage in "Don Juan"—a passage Islay knew well, the adventure in the Seraglio: what boy does not know it? He went back a number of pages and stopped at the picture of Haidee finding Juan. Rose sat beside him on a sofa, looking at the illustrations as he turned the leaves. This one attracted her. She bent over the page and read the lines inscribed beneath the engraving:

"And slowly by his swimming eyes was seen
A lovely female face of seventeen.
'Twas bending close o'er his, and the small mouth
Seemed almost prying into his for breath."

"What is 'Don Juan' about?" she asked, looking up. "I remember some verses about a shipwreck in a reading-book at school. Was this the shipwreck?—was this boy wrecked in that shipwreck, I mean?"

Islay told her of the shipwreck, and she asked to see the quotation which had been in her reading-book. "It was only two verses," she said. "I used to know them by heart, for I had to learn them as a task once for being rude to the teacher. It began:

'Then rose from sea to sky the wild farewell,
Then shrieked the timid, and stood still the brave,
And some sprang into——'

I forget it."

The passage was soon found, and Rose looked at it with much curiosity. She felt it very strange that these two stanzas, hitherto occupying—although only half remembered—an immense space in her mind, should have such an insignificant appearance in their position in the long poem of which they formed a part. She read them through and then glanced at Islay with a dreamy, far-off look in her splendid eyes. He wished to speak, but dared not, and sat adoring. As for Rose she had only summoned up the scene in

the school in Glasgow, and the concern she had felt as to the nature of her punishment—lines to write, or lines to commit. It was not a pleasing memory, so she turned to the book again, and the picture of Haidee finding Juan.

“Who was Haidee, Islay? Tell me about Haidee.”

Islay told her, halting and blushing, the story of Haidee and Juan and the anger of Lambro, and read passages here and there—the whole of “The Isles of Greece” for one. “I remember that somewhere,” said Rose. He read also the “Ave Maria,” with a deep thrill of passion in his young voice, that yet had no effect on Rose except to startle her a little.

“Ave Maria ! blessed be the hour,
The time, the clime, the spot where I so oft
Have felt that moment in its fullest power
Sink o’er the earth so beautiful and soft,
While swung the deep bell in the distant tower,
Or the faint dying day hymn stole aloft,
And not a breath crept through the rosy air,
And yet the forest leaves seemed stirred with prayer.

“ Ave Maria ! ’tis the hour of prayer !
Ave Maria ! ’tis the hour of love !
Ave Maria ! may our spirits dare
Look up to thine, and to thy Son’s above !
Ave Maria ! Oh, that face so fair !
Those downcast eyes beneath the Almighty dove.”

He stopped there, not because he had any precocious critical power, but simply because he could not understand the concluding couplet of the stanza, unaware that it had neither sense nor form. He laid down the book, and put one arm round Rose’s neck, hardly touching her, the other round her waist, hardly touching her, and kissed her, and looked at her long. He was very pale, and she wondered and shrank a little from his blazing eyes. And she shrank still more when the blood surged into his face and he kissed her again, still hardly touching her, although his arms trembled. Her wonder reached a climax when he sprang with a cry from the sofa, and stood in the middle of the room pressing his hands to his eyes. Some

words of another poet had flashed across his memory :

“ That day they read no more.”

He grew breathless with astonishment. He saw it all at a glance ; Mrs. Tiplady's remark about love and locksmiths ; her imprisoning them and giving them Byron's poems. Why should she want them to fall ? What a satanic creature ! But it was impossible ; there was some other explanation : no woman would betray the daughter of the man she was about to marry. And they, Islay and Rose, were also to be married in a day or two. Again all that Mrs. Tiplady had done and said passed through his mind in a flash. There was no escape. She had connived at, conspired their ruin. Had she ? In the obscure, though rapid workings of his mind, “ Perhaps,” it occurred to him, “ perhaps she did it out of kindness, out of sympathy. Perhaps from her point of view—perhaps

indeed, it didn't matter. Were they not to be married on Wednesday?"

He looked at Rose. She had risen, and was approaching him with outstretched arms and melting eyes of childish wonder and compassion. For a moment he staggered irresolute, then he plunged at the window. It was not made to open, the room being ventilated by two revolving panes in the upper part. He turned to the door and thundered at it with feet and hands. In a minute Mrs. Tiplady came and unlocked it.

"Be quiet, you beast," she said.

People were crowding into the passage from the shop.

As Islay sped past her he struck her a hard blow on the cheek with his open hand, and Mrs. Tiplady fell against the wall. Recovering herself almost immediately, she cried, "What do you want? This is private." At which the little crowd withdrew slowly, muttering and looking back.

“Where away, Islay?” asked Salerne, leisurely following Mrs. Tiplady.

“I’ll see you at the station,” said Islay, seizing his hat, and rushing out into the rain.

When Salerne got to the room, Rose lay on the sofa sobbing, with Mrs. Tiplady bending over her.

“Hush my dear,” Mrs. Tiplady was saying. “There’s no harm done. Tuts! tuts! this’ll never do. And here’s your father too.”

At the mention of her father, Rose raised her head, and cried, “Oh, father, there’s something wrong with Islay. He’s ill.”

Mrs. Tiplady stared at the girl with open mouth.

“What’s all this?” asked Salerne, his slow mind beginning to bestir itself at the sight of his daughter in distress. “Jane, what’s that mark on your face?”

“It’s the excitement,” said Mrs. Tiplady, covering with her handkerchief the cheek Islay had struck. In the turn things had

taken she was uncertain what course to follow.

"It's very like the mark of fingers," said Salerne simply.

"Rose," he continued, turning to his daughter, "was it Islay that made that noise?"

"Yes, father; he turned ill suddenly," said Rose, with such perfect candour that Mrs. Tiplady again stared at her.

"Rose," she said, "you'd better come with me. It's your mother, you need, I think."

"It's me she needs then," said Salerne.

"Me!" cried Rose. "There's nothing wrong with me. It's Islay that's ill."

"The child's an idiot," thought Mrs. Tiplady, grinding her teeth. Chagrin nearly choked her; her plot had failed utterly; and, worse still, her intention had evidently been detected by Islay.

"I can't wait just now," she said, controlling herself. "You'll tell me all about it when we shut at three, Rose."

Salerne made a motion to detain her, but thought better of it. He was now convinced that something very unusual had happened, and, taking the key from the outside, he locked the door, and sat down beside Rose. Holding her face in his hands, he looked into her eyes. Slowly, courageously, he said, "Rosey, my little daughter, could you tell me everything that happened in this room after I left it?"

"I think so, if I can remember everything," answered Rose, a little frightened.

"If you can remember everything. Is there anything you don't want to remember?"

"Nothing, father. At least, I wish I didn't have to remember that Islay turned ill."

Salerne kissed her, and, rising, took a turn across the room; a slow smile on his dreamy face looked very subtle, but was only an expression of his deep content.

"Islay's not ill," he said. "He's been

having an adventure, Rose—one to the bargain.” And he smiled again, a slow smile, which was really this time almost as subtle as it seemed.

“What made you think he was ill, Rosey?”

“We were reading Byron together, and he——”

“Byron? Where got ye Byron?”

“Mrs. Tiplady gave it to us,” answered Rose, showing the book, which her father took and threw down again. “She came, and gave us Byron, and locked the door to keep people from bothering us.”

“Locked the door! It was she locked the door!”

“Yes.”

“Gave ye Byron and locked the door!”

“Yes; she was very kind—just like a mother. She told us nobody would look near us for a whole hour, and we were very happy, playing and reading Byron. It was when Islay stopped reading that he turned ill. He grew white, and kissed me;

and then he grew red and kissed me again. Then he screamed and tried to get out by the window, and when he couldn't, he beat against the door with his hands and knees and feet; and I got frightened and began to cry."

"You love Islay, Rosey?"

"Yes, I love him."

"But ye'll love him better some day. If I had the whole world to choose from, Rosey, Islay's the man I would pick out for ye."

He paced the room again, muttering, "I thought Jane would have had more sense." Then it flashed into his mind as it had flashed into Islay's, "What if she meant it?" He drove the idea away, but it kept returning.

After a little he took his daughter home without seeing Mrs. Tiplady, and told her not to leave the house again that day. On going to join Islay at the station, he gave Mrs. Macalister instructions to reject all invitations for his daughter from the "Rose

and Crown." "I don't want her," he said bluntly, "to see Mrs. Tiplady till I come back."

Mrs. Macalister made no verbal reply, but smiled grimly and took a pinch of snuff.

X.

THE day was bright again when Islay and Salerne met at the station. Islay looked confused, but Salerne put him at his ease by taking his arm, and walking up and down the platform with him. Nothing was said except that it was well the rain had gone off. They took a train to King's Cross, and there got a bus for Waterloo Station, where they booked to Highbourne.

By the time the Highbourne Sunday afternoon express had started, Islay's experience of the morning had become very indistinct in his thoughts. He was bound on an adventure at last, had reached the very threshold of it, and his excitement filled the foreground of his mind with images of battle and daring. All the deeds of the heroes he loved rose before him in an endless pageant. He saw

the Black Knight—like most boys, he preferred the Black Knight to Ivanhoe—splintering the postern-gate of Torquilstone; and at the same time—for he had been a very celebrated dunce at the High School of Glasgow only a month before—he remembered that he had never been able to understand in the sentence, “What dost thou see, Rebecca?” again demanded the wounded Knight,” why the first clause was the subordinate one. He saw D’Artagnan quarrelling on his first day in Paris with Porthos, Aramis and Athos; Hamlet leaping into Ophelia’s grave, and Hotspur crying out :

“ Let them come ;

They come like sacrifices in their trim ;

And to the fired-ey’d maid of smoky war

All hot and bleeding shall we offer them ;

The mailèd Mars shall on his altar sit

Up to the ears in blood.”

He knew Hotspur’s speeches; he had recited them at exhibitions. (“Strange,”

a classical master had said, applauding Islay's recitation, "that fellows good at elocution should be such duffers at everything else." It was a stock remark of that classical master's on exhibition - days.) Quentin Durward, Amyas Leigh, Hereward the Wake, crowded the *mélee* in his mind along with Harold of England and Hector of Troy.

When they arrived at Highbourne and got into a cab which was waiting for them, Islay's meditation was interrupted for a little; but as soon as they were clear of the town, and rolling along the coast-road to Belminster, the pageant reappeared. Scotch heroes gradually pressed to the front — Claverhouse, and Montrose, and Douglas, and Wallace, and Bruce, and the famous admirals—Sir Andrew Wood, who fought the English for two days at the mouth of Tay and beat them; and Sir Andrew Barton, who fought them for as long and was beaten. Salerne, sitting opposite Islay, saw with concern the

passage of strong emotions across his face, and at last the moisture gather in his eyes.

“What is it, Islay?” he asked, thinking the boy was in misery about the morning’s doings.

“Fight on, my men,” said Islay, in a subdued tone, intense with feeling—

“‘Fight on my men,’ Sir Andrew says,
‘A little I’m hurt, but yet not slain;
I’ll but lie down and bleed a while,
And then I’ll rise and fight again.’”

With the third line Islay’s voice broke; and he burst into a passion of tears at the end of the verse. Salerne said nothing; he had never heard of the “Ballad of Sir Andrew Barton,” but he understood dimly Islay’s emotion: there was never anybody so dull-witted or so much of a coward as to be out of sympathy with the fighter: battle and the romance of battle is as constant in the blood of the world as love and its dream.

The cab drew up at the “Leg and Seven

Stars," an old tavern a little to the west of Belminster, and Salerne and Islay went in and drank some beer. A few whispered words passed between Salerne and the innkeeper. The latter, Islay saw, made a reference to his presence, which Salerne explained, evidently to the innkeeper's satisfaction. They were shortly joined by the cabman, who had been attending to his horse. A brief conversation took place between the three, and some arrangements were made, which each repeated in turn to see that he had them right. Then Islay was introduced to the innkeeper, a jolly-looking red-faced man of the name of Mawcap, and to the cabman, called Slowse, also red-faced and jolly-looking, with an almost inaudible voice which sounded like an attempt at speech across a valley in the midst of a high gale.

"Aha! captain," said the innkeeper to Islay. "So you want to go a-fishing for dulse in deep water—hey! We're safe this time, Salerne. They say as how no-

body ever was caught for no sort of first offence."

"I've seen it in the papers," said Slowse, whispering through the tempest. "First offence—often."

"Gammon, old cock. It don't follow that the first offence as is 'ad up, is the first offence as was committed."

This seemed a sort of revelation to Slowse. He winked one eye at Islay, and nodded his head over his left shoulder at Mawcap, to indicate to Islay that Mawcap was the shrewdest man on the Sussex coast, and that he, Slowse, was proud of his acquaintance.

After a little more whispering Salerne and Islay left the "Leg and Seven Stars." Slowse came to the door with them, and putting his mouth close to Islay's head, whispered as if a faint voice had made itself heard from the interior of a sounding shell, "Go on, young 'un. We want more o' the like o' you—in our trade. Slowse is my

name, Slowse. I'm your man on any lay. Slowse."

Islay stared at the speaker without other reply, and then followed Salerne.

Instead of going straight down to the sea, from which the "Leg and Seven Stars" was distant about a quarter of a mile, Salerne took an oblique course leading to a point on the shore two miles to the west of Belminster. In the coombes and denes, breaking the rounded outline of the low down over which they went, there nestled clumps of hardy old trees—ash and oak and hazel, dark hawthorn and bright green box. At any other time Islay would have cast lingering looks at every patch of wood and every well-kept spinney, but they had now no attraction for him. No gabled manor-house, nor grey church tower half-hidden among the tall elms that clustered here and there along the slopes, made any impression upon him. The sweet thymy grass seemed to have no effect upon his senses; and the fairy rings trod by elvish

footsteps—by the “pharisees,” as the Sussex shepherds call the good folk—did not set his fancy alight as they were used to do. He hardly looked at the sea, visible from the shore to the horizon when the road kept the crown of the down, or seen through the trees as they crossed lower land only in blue splashes that were hardly to be distinguished from the blue sky. Even the note of the down-haunting wheatear had no charm. When the cab stopped at the “Leg and Seven Stars,” Islay had been deep in his dream of heroic adventure. He had therefore left the pageant of which he had been now a spectator, now a principal figure—the companion of kings and warriors, or moved to tears by the imagination of noble deeds—for a mean hedge-tavern where he must fraternise with frowsy, ill-smelling drawers and cab-drivers; and the change made him sick at heart. For a mile and a half he went silent and downcast, glancing now and again at Salerne, who seemed too pre-

occupied to notice his condition. At length, pulling himself together, and adopting as cheerful a tone as he could, he came close to Salerne, and asked him what the inn-keeper had meant by "fishing for dulse in deep water."

"That's the adventure we're on," said Salerne. "You'll know in time."

"And are these men, Mawcap and Slowse, to be with us?"

"Well no, not till the adventure's nearly done."

"Then," said Islay, much relieved, "you and I are to do it alone."

"No; we'll have a companion," said Salerne. "But a different sort a'thegither frae these two."

"Oh! what is he?"

"He's the devil, I think sometimes," replied Salerne. "At any rate he's Mrs. Tiplady's grandfather."

Islay laughed.

"Which is not by no means the same thing," continued Salerne rather testily.

“No, no! I didn’t mean that,” exclaimed Islay; and Salerne was on the instant as unruffled as usual.

“He’s the strangest man or creature I ever met, is old Wat Inglebeard. Mrs. Tiplady’s not the least like him. To be sure he is her mother’s father, and girls take mostly after the other side, they say. He’s a bit over eighty, but as wiry as a thorn-bush, and as straight’s an ash. I’ve been east and west with him in sail and steam three or four times, and there wasn’t a better man before the mast. That’s more than a dozen years ago, but he’s as brisk still—it’s not a twelvemonth since he gave up the sea. Many’s the story he used to tell me of the life he led in his young days, and he always swore he would go back to it before he died. His ship came into Glasgow last summer, and there I met him with a plan all ready to start on his old courses, which looked so promising to make a lump o’ money that I joined him, and ever since I’ve been——”

“ Been what ? ”

Salerne shook his head and they went on in silence, till they came in sight of some low ruins about a furlong from the shore.

“ What’s that ? ” asked Islay.

“ The old minster,” said Salerne.

“ That was burned by the French after the battle of Agincourt ? ”

“ Was it ? Yes, I believe it was. I remember something about it ; but I was only a boy when I left Belminster.”

“ Oh yes ! ” said Islay, who had found out much about Belminster, as soon as he had learned that it was to be the scene of their adventure. “ Some ships from Boulogne came and burned the minster, and sacked the town, while Henry V. was conquering France ; and the people would never go back to it, so they built a new town further east.”

“ Aye,” said Salerne, “ maybe. — You must be carefu’ what you say to Inglebeard, mind. He’ll no’ thank me for bringing you I’m thinking.”

“I thought,” said Islay, halting a second and then going on again, “that you were the leader.”

“I never told ye so.”

Islay had to admit that.

“No,” continued Salerne. “Inglebeard’s the leader. If old Inglebeard had had any book learning, he could have been anything he liked—and always leader. But he don’t know the alphabet.”

“And when shall we see Mr. Inglebeard?”

“At once. He’s in the ruins.”

Islay scanned the few remaining portions of the walls of the first Belminster Abbey, but could see no trace of a human being.

“He’s underground,” said Salerne. “We’re going down to the shore first.”

Islay had almost got over his disappointment at the non-heroic appearance of some of their associates, and the account of Inglebeard renewed his hopes of a really romantic adventure. When they arrived at the shore and Salerne led the way into a

cave—a fissure in a cliff which it pleased Islay to consider a cave—his spirits rose to a rapturous height ; in the whole course of his adventure, this was the only moment at which his actual experience was accompanied by anything like the high happiness he had so often enjoyed in reading or contemplating the adventures of others.

“ Now,” said Salerne, “ let’s see if you can find the way.”

“ The way ? ”

“ Yes. There’s an underground passage.”

Islay searched the fissure round and round, but could find only the one opening—that by which they had entered.

“ See here,” said Salerne, moving from the position he had taken up against one side of the opening, just within the fissure and no more.

Islay looked, and saw that Salerne had been hiding a niche about six feet high, a foot across and two deep.

“ But there’s no way here,” he said.

"Follow me," rejoined Salerne; and pulling Islay back he pressed sideways into the niche and vanished.

With beating heart Islay stepped after, pushing against the rock as if he expected to force a way through it. A quiet laugh behind him seemed like a murmur from the grave.

"Step out and come on left side first," said Salerne laughing again.

Doing as he was directed, Islay immediately felt himself opposite his companion.

"Hold my coat," said Salerne, "and keep close to me."

Six sharp turns in alternate directions brought them panting with the narrowness of the twisted passage, into a tunnel about three feet wide and seven or eight feet high. Here Salerne lit a small lamp which he had brought with him from the inn. This underground path was fully a furlong in length, exactly the distance between the shore and the ruins of Belminster Abbey. It led them into a large crypt, the groined

roof of which was supported by many rows of pillars ; it impressed Islay with a sense of vastness and gloom. Salerne's little lamp flashed on pillar after pillar, and threw long, wavering shadows, that seemed to be sucked back, as the light passed on, into the darkness from which they had momentarily escaped. Having traversed the full extent of the crypt, Salerne and Islay ascended a stair, and entered on another long passage.

“ We're going back now, on a higher level,” said Salerne.

This second path was as long as the first plus the length of the crypt ; and as both floor and ceiling were very irregular, sometimes approaching so closely that a passage could be effected only by crawling on the hands and feet, it took the two adventurers fully a quarter of an hour to traverse it. The lamp had been extinguished owing to the exigency of the way, and they were in total darkness almost up to the very end. Then the light blazed out on them so

suddenly, that it was some time before they recovered the full use of their eyes.

When he was able to see distinctly, Islay found himself in a wide and lofty apartment, lit up by three slits in the face of the cliff. It was nearly square, the cliff side, if anything, being longer than any of the other three. There were signs of rough hewing on all the walls, and the three openings on the cliff side had been cut to the ordinary shape of loop-holes. A tarpaulin, and some rugs and blankets lay in one corner, and a wood fire was smouldering in another, near it some dishes and cooking utensils. An old man, very broad, and a little under the middle height, was shaving himself at a small looking-glass which hung beside one of the loop-holes.

“You, Salerne?” said the old man without turning round. “And what freshwater, fairweather fowl is this you’ve brought?”

“This is Islay Inglis,” replied Salerne

with some diffidence. "I told ye about him last Sunday, and ye wouldn't say whether I was to bring him or not; but I've brought him."

"We don't want no lubberly sons of kite-strings here," said the old man. "But we'll see, we'll see."

When he had finished shaving he wiped his face on a rag, seated himself on a block of wood—several lay about the floor—and without speaking, beckoned Islay to approach him. The boy went straight up, and Inglebeard—for it was he—gazed at him for some time. Islay was too interested to be much put about, and the look of curiosity with which he had returned Inglebeard's gaze, was soon changed to one of unconscious admiration. Extraordinary power distinguished the old man's face and head. A pair of enormous dark eyes blazed under eyebrows like a double-spanned bridge. The nose was large, straight, and thick, but not fleshy; the mouth large and tightly closed. The

brown, leathery-looking cheeks were clean shaven, a little white hair being allowed to grow under the broad chin. The head was almost entirely bald, but its great breadth and length, and fulness in every part, made the beholder think that here was a skull of which, though naked, the owner need never be ashamed. Baldness is many a man's Judas; but his deep, broad, compact head, was a constant witness to Inglebeard's power and magnanimity. The lines in his brow and cheeks, especially about the mouth, indicated viciousness, greed, petty cares, slyness, and much inferiority, to be referred as their main source to the want of education. Inglebeard was dressed like a fisherman with long sea-boots and a jersey, and in attitude, gesture, speech, and general command of his faculties, conveyed the impression of a particularly hale man, of between fifty and sixty; it was only the dark brown parchment of the face, meshed with innumerable small wrinkles, and

trenched with many deep ones, that told of his four-score years.

Inglebeard was completely satisfied with Islay Inglis's appearance.

"Sit down, boy," he said, indicating a block of wood near him. "You're as brave a lad as any that ever cracked biscuit. And you blush too—that's a good sign. Honest men can blush till they're past sixty; I've seen it. And so, boy, you want to have an adventure?"

"Yes, sir," said Islay.

"It's but a wishy-washy adventure we can give you; but I suppose it's the only sort of tack on which you can come athwart an adventure at all now-a-days. Lord bless you, though, there's no risk. What's a year's imprisonment? what's a fine? There was some excitement when you risked your neck. But it was a good death that too, lad. They hung you up in chains, and you swung there merrily in the sweet air within sound of the sea and sight of the ships. I would like that

better than rotting under ground, plugged down in a coffin. But God send me to be drowned! Every voyage, lad, every voyage, for the last dozen years I hoped for death, and a shroud in mid-ocean. But it seems I'll have to die of old age, unless I can get drowned."

"You've had many adventures, have you not?" said Islay.

"Ay, ay," replied Inglebeard. "I was eight years old when Waterloo was fought. My father shipped over many a bag of gold for Boney. I've seen the smugglers in Belminster playing pitch-and-toss with guineas, lad, and the poorest lass that danced on the green with a silk skirt and a bit of right Mechlin at her bosom."

"Salerne never told me, but I guessed it was smuggling," said Islay.

"Smuggling, ay. It made men of us I can tell you. There were no seamen like the smugglers; the navy stopped taking them; they got on so well the crews rebelled. Honest fellows, they were. By

God, they were honest fellows! I've seen two informers whipped to death; and they deserved it."

"I suppose the smugglers thought it was right to smuggle?" said Islay.

"Right!" cried Inglebeard. "It was the only thing for a man born in these parts to do. I know there's nothing against it in the Bible; read I can't, but I know that. Is there anything wrong in shipping tobacco and spirits from one port to another? Nothing; it's the law that's wrong, not the smuggling. Every smuggler's conscience was clear and bright as a fresh run anker of brandy. There's no man safer of a berth aloft than a smuggler, if smuggling's all that's against him; and there's a bunk in hell for every informer, lad."

"*Egmont* ahoy!" said Salerne, who had been watching at one of the loop-holes with a telescope.

Inglebeard joined him at once, and Islay having pushed his seat to another of the

loop-holes, stood up and looked out too. A long, ugly, screw-steamer, high both in the bows and the stern, moving westward at a good rate about two miles from the coast, soon came within his range of vision, which was much circumscribed by the depth and narrowness of the outlook. Islay noticed, or thought he noticed, something white flash at the bows of the *Egmont* as it passed Belminster Abbey. When it was out of sight, Inglebeard returned to his seat, and Salerne set about making tea.

"I hear people talking and laughing on the shore," said Islay.

"Yes," said Inglebeard. "On Sunday evenings, people walk about hereaway."

"But are you not afraid that they'll find you out?"

"What would they find out about me? There's no tobacco or spirits here. But they won't find me. I'll swear there's been nobody here till now, since I left fifty years ago. It was me found it out, lad, in the

spring of 'thirty-eight. We ran a crop of tubs one night, that had lain off the shore here for a week. Straight inland to a farm over the downs we went—six of us, with two tubs a-piece strapped over our shoulders, back and front. We shouldn't have done it all together, but we had got so confident, it was a wonder we didn't do it in broad daylight. Just at the farm, the coast-guardsmen caught us. I was the only one that escaped—with a bullet in my sleeve. Two others were shot down. I ran straight for where I knew a boat was; but when I got to the shore, there were two men waiting for me. I rushed up to the cliff and into the cave, hoping that these fellows might be new hands. But they both knew the place. I squeezed myself into the little sentry-box at the opening, meaning to jump out if any one entered. Many a time when I was a boy I had been in it, and two turnings more; but nobody had ever gone further than that. Nobody thought it was possible to

go further. Senseless and breathless with the long race, I stuffed myself in as far as I had been before. I had not been in since I was a boy. We used to dare each other to go in the three turnings ; as soon as we had done it we hustled out again what we could, more dead than alive—it was so dark, and there was such a cold smell, and the sheer rock all round, so close that you couldn't move a hand to brush away a spider ; you felt as if the earth had taken you in its jaws, and was going to crunch you up and swallow you. We were always as pale's a sheet, and covered with sweat when we came out, and only one or two of us dared to do it. Well, I remembered of this and thought — what nobody ever thought before — me being hunted ; and forced and twisted myself round and round three more turns, and came out into the broad path. I had my tinder-box, and struck a light, and explored the whole place that night. As I durstn't show myself in the neighbourhood, I got away to

London, and have followed the sea pretty much ever since. In a few years the days of smuggling were done; it wasn't worth while, the duty on foreign spirits was made so small; and then the coast-guard got joined to the navy, and there was no squaring of them, or dodging of them. But we're dodging them now, eh, Salerne?"

The old man was glad to speak to Islay. He felt the boy's sympathy with him. Besides, Islay had never heard any of his talk before, and Inglebeard's need to gossip about the old days was all the keener, that he hardly got speech of anybody from week's end to week's end. He gave Islay a whole history of smuggling, and spoke of fighting armed with swingles and bats, and of the disgust of the coast-guard when they came across a crop of stinkibus—*i. e.*, a cargo of spirits that had lain under water so long as to be spoiled. He talked of the hovering limits, of batty-fagging, of scorage tubs, of spottsmen, of shifting quarter-pieces, of sweeping and

creeping ; and it was all wonderful and partly incomprehensible to Islay. He told him of many a strange and cunning device, invented when smuggling ceased to depend for success on numbers and strength of arm, and became a craft ; and mentioned many a famous smuggling boat—the *Mary Ann* of Rye, the *Tam O' Shanter* of Plymouth, the *Rival* of Chichester, the *Black Rover* of Sandwich. Then he harked back to the times of old, and his father's stories of the hey-day of smuggling during the French War. He told him all about the smugglers' camp at Gravelines, which Napoleon kept for them ; and how the smugglers' little boats carried spies backwards and forwards right under the prows of the great English seventy-fours.

“ But wasn't that treachery ? ” asked Islay.

“ No ; the smugglers were a nation by themselves. They weren't English, for they were outlawed, and they never had been French. They couldn't be traitors

except against themselves, which they never were."

Along with the tea, Salerne cooked some fish which Inglebeard had caught in the morning. Ship-biscuit was produced, and the three made a rough meal. Both the tea and the fish were badly smoked, and Salerne and Islay could take no more than was sufficient to blunt the edge of their appetites ; but Inglebeard ate heartily, moistening the hard biscuit in his tea—of which he drank four large cups. He was very brisk afterwards, and began to talk to Islay again, of his voyages, of shipwrecks, and of a campaign he had served in the Confederate Army. He told him too of an attempt he had made in his eightieth year to live an ordinary landsman's life.

"I couldn't stand it," he said. "Everybody that came athwart of me sings out, 'Ay, ay! eighty years old, and so fresh and hearty.' And they asked me what was the price of things in such and such a year, and if I'd ever seen Byron. In a month I

tired of telling all kinds of cuts and crafts of lubberly sons of kite-strings, that I couldn't rightly remember whether the quartern loaf had ever cost one and eleven or not, me never having bought a loaf in my life ; and as for sugar having been two and six, and tea fifteen shillings a pound—might a' been, but I never dealt in them. Nobody thought of being told that the anker of brandy once cost two pounds in France, and was sold for six pounds here, so that there was a profit of nearly a hundred per cent. if we saved only one cargo out of three. But I did have to tell them that if I was at the battle of Trafalgar it was without my knowledge, being only three weeks old at the time, d'ye see. So I overhauled my box and sheered off again, hungry for a taut gale and the salt in my teeth. But last year it came to an end. I'm as good as a young 'un when I'm awake, but I sleep too much. My last voyage I toppled over nearly every watch ; standing or walking down I flopped, and was

dreaming of orange trees and octoroons, the moment my head struck the deck. It was all up with old Wat Inglebeard, hugging the fireside in the sloop *Armchair*, on the voyage to kingdom come! Not me. I've had enough of your stuffy parlours and walks on the Esplanade, and your bread-and-butter men and misses Oh-ing, and Ah-ing, and telling me I'm a marvel, and asking me, was I ever shipwrecked, damn them. Here I came a month ago, and here I'll stay, with the wind humming about me day and night, and the sea for my next-door neighbour. Me and the sea. I'm always at home to the sea, and something tells me, we'll take up house together soon."

The old man had risen, pacing the deck of his cave and filling his pipe while he talked. He smoked at one of the loop-holes watching the sea, and when his pipe was out, he lay down on the tarpaulin, wrapped himself in a blanket, and was soon sound asleep.

Salerne whispered to Islay that they could not start on the conclusion of their adventure, till it was quite dark. The sun was already down, but the moon was in the sky, and they would require to wait till it set, which would not be till about eleven. At ten, they would waken Inglebeard, and all three leave the cave for a little bay, not far from the "Leg and Seven Stars," where a boat awaited them. In the meantime he, Salerne, meant to stay where he was and smoke. Islay smoked for a while too ; but soon the sea air overcame him. He fell asleep with his head on a rug, and Salerne had the watch to himself.

Punctually at ten he roused his sleeping companions. They left the cave, and by unfrequented ways arrived, shortly before eleven, at the nook where their boat lay.

XI.

SALERNE pushed off the boat under a dark sky in which the stars were deeply sunk. Islay and he took an oar a-piece, and Inglebeard steered. The wind was light and wandering; it moved about on the water restlessly, as if seeking to start a quarry; the vast dome of night felt very empty with nothing stirring on the sea, except their little boat, and the light questing wind. They rowed at their ease in silence for half an hour, when Inglebeard ordered them to lay their oars aboard. Having himself unshipped the rudder, he went to the bow, while Salerne put out an oar in the stern rollock, and waited Inglebeard's orders.

“Will ye manage it, think ye?” asked Salerne.

“I see every float from here. They have

drifted about half a mile inshore, just as I reckoned, and a point or two to the east."

Islay looked a-head, but could see nothing, except the black sheen of the water, and that only for a yard or two in front. He then fixed his gaze on Inglebeard, and watched him with intense interest. The old man had become a piece of the boat. He was, as it were, the head and neck of a great sea-bird, fishing at night with the whole sea to himself. He seemed to move along a well-known path, taking, as he whispered, "la'board" or "sta'board," and Salerne plied his oar, every turning or winding with the utmost precision; and each time that he said "stop her," he pulled aboard, with Islay's help, a strong cord a fathom or two in length, with a cork float at one end, and a case of some kind, or a barrel at the other; there were seven cases, and three barrels in all.

"That's the crop," said Inglebeard.

Salerne adjusted the rudder, and the three resumed their former positions.

“And were they dropped from the steamer?” asked Islay.

“Yes, lad,” answered Inglebeard. “The stokers are our men.”

“And where’s the *Egmont* bound for?”

“For Bristol from Hamburg, with beet-sugar—and tobacco and Schiedam for Inglebeard, Salerne and Co.”

In reply to further questions Islay learned that, Salerne and Mrs. Tiplady finding the capital, Inglebeard had established about a year before taking up his abode in the cave a sort of depôt for smuggled goods in Hamburg, and organised the system which he had just seen in operation. Slowse and Mawcap were fully in the secret; their business being to distribute to commercial travellers and others, less initiated, those goods, a very large proportion, which Mrs. Tiplady and Salerne were unable to dispose of.

On the whole Islay was not enchanted with his adventure. Inglebeard was interesting, romantic even; but the business

itself was so absolutely mercenary, that as he rowed back, and thought of his sweetheart and of the heroes he loved, the tears fell hot and fast on his hands. He let them fall; nobody could see him. Then he began to wonder why it was that he cried so often—he, a great fellow, nearly sixteen, with hair on his chest and a deep voice; and grew ashamed of himself, and pulled so hard that he had turned the boat round against the helm and Salerne, before Inglebeard saw what was the matter and called on him to keep time.

At the shore they were met by Mawcap and Slowse, each with two large portmanteaus, into which Inglebeard and Salerne thrust the “crop” in less time almost than it takes to tell, while the others fastened the boat. In half a minute they and their burden were inside Slowse’s cab with Slowse on the box; and they drove off.

But they had hardly started, when a loud voice called out “Halt, in the Queen’s

name!" and a couple of shots were fired with such a rending noise in the darkness, and so unexpectedly, that they seemed to tear up the night; they were, however, only blank cartridges from navy revolvers.

"I remember," said Inglebeard, like one waking from a dream, "walking hereabouts with my wife in the spring of 'thirty-five, and I never saw her again. I wish they had buried her in the sea."

Slowse was captured at once. Mawcap jumped out first and was caught without a struggle. Salerne following him on the same side, made a stout resistance; he was, however, soon secured. Islay tried the other side; but the cab was surrounded by a strong body of the coastguard, reinforced by a number of excisemen. Seeing several figures at the cab door, Islay hesitated, stumbled, and fell out. The men at the door thought as he struck against them in his fall that he was attacking them, and drew back a step, while one fired a blank cartridge with the intention

of frightening him. Islay was not frightened. He grasped the pair of legs nearest him upsetting their owner, rose, and ran. Two men followed him, and several shots were fired, but the darkness prevented pursuit and he got off.

“Caught!” cried Inglebeard in astonishment stepping out of the cab.

Either his seeming passivity deceived his captors, and they held him slackly, or the strength of his youth came back to him once more; for he wrenched himself free and was down at the shore and into the boat before his escape was realised. Four men followed him, and found that he had pushed the boat out as far as he could, and was cutting the rope that moored it; but his blunt knife delayed him. They waded into the water, and laying hold of the boat, ordered Inglebeard to surrender.

“No,” he replied in a clear voice.

He flung both oars overboard, and leaping after them swam out to sea. His pursuers stood motionless, amazed and

silent, listening to the splash of his arms. In little more than a minute the sound of his swimming ceased. When they told Salerne he said, "His sea-boots sunk him. He and the sea have taken up house together now." And the coastguard wondered if it was a crew of escaped lunatics they had captured.

As for Islay, finding himself unpursued he ceased running, although he still hurried, continuing at a rapid pace in the direction he had first taken, and which he guessed rightly would lead to the cave. He had some difficulty in picking out his way, and in finding the entrance; still, within an hour after the surprise of his party, he was lying on Inglebeard's tarpaulin, comfortably wrapped in the blankets the old man would never use again. He took it for granted that the other two had been caught; but it concerned him little, and his excitement was so great, that he gave no consideration as to what course he himself should follow.

The wind, still light and wandering, swept its airy garments past the loop-holes at intervals. It paused sometimes as if it were looking in; but finding Inglebeard gone, and not being very sure of Islay, it went past instead of entering. All night it kept on lingering, and going, and pausing, and sighing softly. Gradually it soothed Islay to rest—it and the waves that fell in full chords on the beach, or whitened their dark gleaming lengths in long runs and pearly passages, always, to Islay's ear, with the soft pedal down.

His last thoughts before he fell asleep were of the future, when he should have a boy of his own, and bring him to see this cave, and tell him the story of Inglebeard; and Rose should come with them—Rose. He stretched out his arm and clasped her in fancy to his breast, and was murmuring in her ear when sleep took him.

There were fine moments in Islay's adventure, he recognised afterwards; but the finest of all was that in which he first

entered the cave with Salerne, and felt as if the time were big with fate. When told of the death of Inglebeard, he was inclined to lament that he had not been present; then he thought perhaps it was better to have escaped—to have slept a whole night in a cave lulled by the wind and the waves.

XII.

THE flitting to Lancaster Gardens had been accomplished. There was little except clothes to take from Whitgroom's; but some old furniture that had been brought from Glasgow and stored, required many hours to remove, unpack, and arrange. The arrangement indeed Mrs. Inglis gave up in despair, and sat down to read the newspaper, and wait her husband's home-coming. He was already late for dinner. He had been out all day, an unusual thing for him at any time, and especially so in such a domestic crisis as the change to a new dwelling. Mrs. Inglis, gracious-hearted, sweet-tempered woman as she was, could not help fretting a little. She had been very busy; had borne the burden of the day alone; had bruised one of her knees too, scratched her hand, and

torn her dress. Her two daughters, who were in the drawing-room with her, on couches reading novels, suddenly as if by mutual consent, dropped their books, looked at their watches, and coughed pathetically.

Mrs. Inglis glanced up from her paper, and her nerves, very well strung, of the very finest fibre—they were hardly ever out of tune—jarred a little at the aspect of her daughters. They had that mingled air of injured innocence, proud resignation, self-pity, and contempt for things in general, which women who are not expecting their time find so aggravating—the misapplication of this word has taken too deep a root to be eradicated—so aggravating in those who are expecting their time, and which drives most men to distraction, especially the prospective fathers.

“Don’t look like that, Lizzie—Agnes,” said Mrs. Inglis. “One would think a woman had never been that way before.”

“Mamma!” said Lizzie, who had been married only a year. “How dreadful! Why will you say such coarse things?”

Agnes, who was about to be a mother for the third time, sighed, blushed, and did her best to look happy and careless.

“Oh bother!” said Mrs. Inglis. “You ought to have walked six miles before dinner, instead of moping about the house. The day before you were born, Agnes, I shopped all the forenoon, and scrubbed the staircase and the lobby afterwards, as it was the servant’s day out, and we had only one then.”

“How could I go shopping, such a fright!” said Lizzie.

“I don’t think it’s at all fair of you mamma,” said Agnes, still trying to look serene. “You know what often happens if women exert themselves, especially their arms. I wouldn’t mind the shopping. I’ll go shopping to-morrow, and walk as many miles as you like.”

“Fiddlededee!” said Mrs. Inglis. “Great,

thumping women like you may exert their arms as much as they like without any danger—clean windows even.”

“If papa was here,” said Agnes, breaking down, “you wouldn’t talk like that.”

“Ay ; *if* papa was here,” said Mrs. Inglis ; “but where is papa, that’s what I should like to know. Oh !—Aggy, dear !—don’t cry. My pet !—whisht !—Lizzie, come.”

The three women were all seated on one couch, Mrs. Inglis in the middle with an arm round either daughter, swaying them gently backwards and forwards, and crooning a lullaby, when the housemaid brought a telegram.

“From papa ? ”

Yes ; it was from papa, and ran :

“Won’t be for dinner ; gone to the theatre.”

“He will not be for dinner,” said Mrs. Inglis, catching her breath. “Well, we

shall just take dinner without him. Come, dears."

Her daughters were very good to Mrs. Inglis at dinner. They could scarcely understand, nor did she quite know herself, why she should be so troubled about her husband's absence. It was annoying certainly; and Islay away too, although that, to be sure, was no unusual occurrence, and in the present instance expected. So they soothed her with compliments about her new house, and praised the electric light; and remarked on her own fresh looks and youthful spirit. And she understood them; and when they returned to the drawing-room, arranged cushions on their couches for them, and talked to them gently of their husbands away in Glasgow, and to Agnes of her two boys. At half-past ten, she put them to bed very lovingly; and brought them with her own hands a wonderful posset made by herself, from a recipe which had been in her mother's family from time immemorial.

John Inglis came home at midnight, and found his wife waiting for him in the library. It was a room of moderate size, with unpolished oak furniture. Books, concealed by dark-green velvet curtains running on brass rods, were ranged round the whole room, the shelves reaching from the floor to about the height of a dado. Busts in marble and bronze, and various bric-à-brac stood on the tops of the cases, and some water-colours, pastels, and engravings hung on the dark-green wall. Mrs. Inglis, who had been reclining on a lounge, rose on the entrance of her husband, poured out some whiskey, and cut a cigar for him. She looked at him the while with her soft, laughing, grey eyes—no question, only welcome in them. She was dressed in a dark-coloured gown, cut very low, with lace on her arms and bust. Part of her hair had escaped from the loose coil in which she always dressed it—thick brown hair with no fire in it, but as soft as silk. She had

connived at its escape, as a general will sometimes permit a prisoner to get off, having taken care to charge him with false information. She wished to render her husband very submissive; and then she would talk to him! But he regarded her with smiling defiance; and she thought she detected a secret in his glance. He looked exceedingly well, a little flushed, with his ruddy hair and beard, pure complexion, and bold eyes.

He lit the cigar, and drank some of the whiskey.

“Well, Mary,” he said, “How do you like your new house?”

“I’ve been too busy to like or dislike.”

“Have you? Yes, of course; there must have been things to do. I’m sorry I was away.”

“You couldn’t help it, I suppose. The Scotch furniture I could do nothing with, so I told the men to come back to-morrow. You will help me to arrange it, won’t you?”

“Is it not rather out of place here?”

“Oh no! Most of it will suit well enough.”

“All right.”

“What was the play?”

“An opera—it wasn’t a play. *Don Giovanni*.”

“And who were with you?”

“Baptist Lake.”

“Oh, he!—only he?”

“Yes.”

“I never knew you take such a sudden fancy before.”

“No; but did you ever meet a more fascinating man?”

“I suppose he is fascinating.”

“I should think so.”

“Well, dear; I hope you enjoyed it. Do you remember when you and I saw *Don Giovanni* for the first time?”

“No—yes.”

Mrs. Inglis was losing her pleasantness; the defiance in her husband’s manner had not been at all modified by the gentle treatment he was receiving.

"Perhaps you would like to finish your cigar alone," she said.

"Are you tired?" he asked.

"Yes; I'm going to bed."

"Well, good-night."

"Good-night? What do you mean?"

Her grasp was on the handle, but she kept the door closed.

"Mary, I'm not coming with you," he said. "In fact, I've been thinking that it's time you and I had separate rooms. We can't continue our old-fashioned ways in London you know."

The brutality of his words was altogether belied by the pallor of his face and his gasping utterance. He had risen and was close beside her, both leaning against the door—her right side and his left; his cheeks as pale as his shirt; hers as red as her lips. She said nothing, and he continued.

"I want to read in bed at night, and"—
She laughed scornfully. "The short and the long of it is, Mary, it's ridiculous for

people who have been married so long as you and I to go on as we've been doing, especially when we can afford separate rooms."

"John," she said, becoming at once as pale as he, "we've been married twenty-eight years come the third of July, and we never had a quarrel that we couldn't kiss away when night came. But this won't grow to a quarrel, John. We'll have one room till we die; for we love each other, don't we? and our love won't change even although we no longer—even when we are old and frail. If love doesn't mean that, it's not love but shamefulness."

She put her arm in his—she was almost as tall as he; and "blinkit on him bonny."

"Come, my own," she said, her mouth close at his ear.

"No," he cried, withdrawing his arm.

"There's another woman then," she said slowly; adding with a sudden blaze of anger, "and you've lied to me. She was with you at the theatre."

He shrank from her, and then grew boisterous, like the best and the worst of men when their wives find them out in deceit.

“Look here, Mary, I won’t have a scene—I won’t have it. I’ll be master in my own house. Go to bed. By the way, who are coming to dinner on Wednesday? I forget.”

“Dr. Cairncross and his wife, and Hector Almond.”

“Well, Baptist Lake and Mrs. Meldrum are coming too.”

“Mrs. Meldrum?”

“Yes, a friend of Baptist’s.”

“But I have never heard of her before. I haven’t asked her.”

“But I have.”

“You? Then—perhaps I’m too old-fashioned again—what kind of women accept men’s invitations, without knowing their wives?”

“But she doesn’t know I’m married.”

“What?”

"This is how it happened," said Inglis, becoming more and more exasperated as the necessity for explanation grew. "Mrs. Meldrum is a widow, and Baptist told her I was a bachelor when he introduced us. Mrs. Meldrum thinks she is coming to a bachelor's house."

"To be mistress of it."

"I don't know. But I'm paying off Baptist, for I haven't told either that the other's coming."

"But you have deceived this woman, too."

"I haven't. It happened—that's all; and went on. It will be cleared up on Wednesday, and Mrs. Meldrum will have it out with Baptist."

"In our house, John?"

"It will be evident only to you and me."

"Oh, John! I was so glad to come to London. We've only been here a month, and I wish I was back in Glasgow. I would never complain of the filthy east winds in Sauchiehall Street again."

Inglis laughed ; and Mrs. Inglis herself could not help smiling at such an unexpected turn. She was about to continue ; but feeling something else than laughter rising in her throat, she opened the door quickly, and went upstairs to her room.

Candles were burning on her toilet-table ; but she turned on the electric light, with which all the rooms in the house were fitted, and fronted herself in the mirror.

“ Mary McClymont or Inglis,” she said, “ you’re forty-five, you’re forty-five.”

Much she thought that night, but these were the only words she said aloud.

She peered at her face. It was haggard now ; but she had sense left to deduct the effect of the sudden and deep wound she had received. Here and there were dints in her cheeks. She thought they were liker dimples than wrinkles still. She let all her hair fall about her : it came to her waist—thick, soft, and silky, a dead brown. Many a time her husband had twined his hands in it ; what need had he of other

bonds? She took her hand glass, and looked at herself on all sides, and sighed a little. It was true, she was not so slender as she once had been; but she had a figure still. Then she tore the lace from her arms and bosom: all was white and clear—and shoulder-blades and collar-bones, smooth, no more than marked, like snow-wreaths, or things hidden under powdery snow. She pressed her mouth on her upper arm; surely it was warm and soft. She was forty-five; but she thought, happily in the midst of her distress, that any man might be proud to lay his head on her bosom. She sat down on a large rocking-chair—almost the only piece of the Glasgow furniture that had been placed; her husband had bought it for her when her first baby, a boy, was born. Her first baby! It had not lived long. Then had come her three daughters at intervals of two years; then Islay, at a longer interval; and seven years after his birth, another boy, which, like her first, had died

in infancy. For half-an-hour she sat rocking in her chair, and thinking of her nursing times; she had suckled all her children. Then she rose and paced the room. Her whole life passed before her. Her happy childhood among cows and sheep and milk; the long, long summer evenings when the hay was won, and the hot autumn days of the harvest. Her first school-days—how miserable they had been! She never could learn; was always at the foot of the class, and being caned and kept in. And the crusty old parish schoolmaster, who seemed to hate all his pupils except the pale ones. Her two years at a boarding-school in Edinburgh; still booby, and not much liked by her companions; but growing indifferent, leaping with joy when the holidays came, and she could go rabbit-shooting and fishing with Johnnie Inglis. Then her marriage at seventeen. She smiled at the memory of the utter unintelligence with which she

had wedded John Inglis ; and the sudden and wonderful revelation of spirit and sense. How her mind and her body had wakened together—the very rules of grammar and arithmetic, before so obscure, becoming as clear as noon-day ; and she had learned to sing and play, and even to read French with her husband. Thus she came round to her babies again, and went over all her nursing times. And the father of her children had left her for ever ; the lover, who had made her understand her womanhood, and opened knowledge to her in books and the secrets of nature, had thrown her aside ; the man she loved was no longer hers. How suddenly it had happened—in twenty-four hours. On Sunday night when her husband left Whitgroom's with Baptist Lake for the Middle-class Club, he had been hers ; and now on Monday night he was hers no longer. A flash of pride in her husband shot through the gloom for a moment :

he had lied to her, she felt certain, when he had said his sole companion was Baptist Lake; he had tried to mislead her—so clumsily; but he was not going to *live* a lie, he had left her at once. Yes; it was better to have a husband like that than to be deceived and not to know it. And he had been so defiant, and shame-faced, and blustering about it too—always his way when in the wrong.

Then slowly a sense of the immeasurable and intolerable wrong done her rose like a black tide flooding her heart and brain, and drowning every other thought. She bit her lips, clenched her teeth, and twisted her hands behind her back. No thought of vengeance—not once did any faintest dream of vengeance assail her. She suffered blankly, blindly, the intolerable sense of wrong, until the black flood of misery changed into a bright flood of tears, and her heart and mind were relieved. Over-wearied she undressed, put out the lights and went to bed. Her tears flowed

for some time after she lay down, and then sleep began to fall upon her, but before oblivion came, the idea that he would return to her dawned at last. Half sleeping, half waking she rose, set her door ajar, and turned on the light. She would leave her door open and her lamp burning every night till her husband came back. Upon that thought she fell asleep almost as soon as she lay down again.

XIII.

Mrs. INGLIS was very astonishing to her daughters on Tuesday. At breakfast she talked as if for a wager, and made fun of her husband unmercifully, always calling him "grandpapa," and referring to his "bald spot," a locality which had no existence except in her imagination. Inglis, sombre and ill at ease, made no reply to his wife's chaff. Lizzie, the more recently married daughter, thought Mamma was very vulgar, and Agnes pressed her foot more than once to stay her galloping tongue, till Mrs. Inglis flashed a look from her grey eyes, not laughing now, but sparkling, like struck flints, that put an end to her daughters' attempts at mediation.

"Poor old man," said Mrs. Inglis. "You must take care of yourself and not stay

out too late. You have no idea how old grandpapa has grown, girls—all of a sudden, too. Last night was his farewell to the theatre. It's all over. He has given up the follies of his youth and turned anchorite, with a cell of his own and a hair shirt, and a whip; and when he's tired, I'm to lay it on; and won't I flay him. Well, I had no idea grandpapa had been such a sinner; but it's never too late to mend, and he has turned over a new leaf at last, like Thomas à Becket."

Inglis left the breakfast-table much sooner than usual.

"He's going to confession, now," said Mrs. Inglis. "Who would have thought that the apostle of the New Calvinism, the gospel of damnation, would have become a Roman Catholic?"

"But has papa become a Catholic?" asked Lizzie innocently, when Inglis had gone.

"No, Lizzie," replied Mrs. Inglis. "It's your mother that's become mad. And for

madness they say music is the best cure. So we'll have some music."

Mrs. Inglis gave instructions that when the men came about the furniture, they were to be sent away again till Friday. Then she took her daughters to an isolated apartment—once the housekeeper's room; shortly to be the nursery—where there was a serviceable piano. Mrs. Inglis had not been known to touch the piano for years; Islay played and sang so much better than she, that she could not endure her own performance. That Tuesday forenoon, however, she practised her old songs and her vocal exercises for a good two hours, until her daughters implored her to desist.

"Mamma," said Agnes, very wittily for her, "you surely don't want to cure your own madness by driving us insane?"

After lunch the three women drove through the Park, and by Piccadilly, Regent Street, and Oxford Street, home through the Park again. In Piccadilly Mrs. Inglis stopped the carriage at a hairdresser's, and

ordered a man to be at Lancaster Gardens early on Wednesday evening.

“That’s for grandpapa’s tonsure,” she said. “The sooner it’s done the better. He’ll die in the odour of sanctity.”

“I don’t understand you, mamma,” said Agnes, looking scared, and wondering if her mother were going mad in reality.

“I thought, perhaps, it was for yourself,” said Lizzie; “shouldn’t you have a maid now that you’re in London?”

“A maid? No—I——” Her mouth trembled; she would have burst into tears had she said more. For twenty-eight years her husband, her lover, had helped her with a string or a pin when she needed it. There had been, when the full tide of Inglis’s prosperity set in, some talk of a lady’s-maid for her, but she had dismissed the idea, never to revert to it. Having been, like all her class, unaccustomed to much help at her toilette, a woman “constantly fraking about her,” as she put it, would have been a great nuisance; and she had

none of the pretence of that other *bourgeoise* who, when she became wealthy, kept a lady's-maid for the look of the thing, but never allowed her across the threshold either of her dressing-room or her bedroom.

Inglis was punctual at dinner, and quite pleasant; his wife, more subdued and gentle than she had been at breakfast. He asked about the Scotch furniture, and Mrs. Inglis said she was re-considering the matter; there was something in his suggestion about its being out of keeping with the Boxtree splendours. Perhaps it might be better after all to sell it, or divide it between Agnes and Lizzie. Inglis disapproved of both proposals.

"Out of keeping or not," he said, "when it comes to be a question of giving it up altogether, I can't do it."

For the rest of the evening and when she went to bed, that remark of her husband's kept coming into her head: "When it comes to be a question of giving it up altogether, I can't do it." If he could say

this of old furniture, he would surely feel more strongly about an actual separation from his wife. And so when she went to her lonely bed a second time, and left her light burning and her door open, Mrs. Inglis thought, "If he doesn't come back to me next Monday I shall leave the house ; and if that does not make him mine again, why then I know I shall die, and he can marry the other."

She fell asleep crying ; but not without the deep, though for a woman, dreadful, satisfaction of having a plan of her own, independent of the will of others.

On Wednesday morning she was up early, having so many things to see to. As she had no butler yet, the entire management of the dinner came on her ; but she arranged everything so well that she was quite ready for the hairdresser at half-past five.

Dr. Cairncross and his wife, old friends of the Inglises, settled in London for over a dozen years, arrived first. Inglis was alone in the drawing-room when they came.

Agnes and Lizzie, much to their own content, were not to be in evidence at all that night.

"I wonder what's come over my wife," said Inglis, having shaken hands with the Cairncrosses. After a remark or two, getting impatient, he ordered Sandy Gow, the coachman-in-waiting, to call his mistress. Sandy brought back word that Mrs. Inglis would be in in a minute or two.

"But isn't this very bad form, Mrs. Cairncross?" said Inglis.

"The lady of the house ought to receive her guests, certainly," rejoined Mrs. Cairncross, one of those bridling women, not ill-natured, but taking microscopic views of things.

"Oh! what does it matter?" said Dr. Cairncross, bluff, and with a great reputation for common-sense, not by any means undeserved. He had married a stupid woman for her money, and yet had succeeded in making himself and his wife actually respected: one of those impossible

feats, achieved sometimes by common-sense, never by genius.

“How many are you going to have, Inglis?” he asked.

“Three, besides yourselves.”

“Small—not too small.”

“One of them is a host in himself, Hector Almond; and another, although I suppose his name is not known, is a most delightful companion.”

“You amaze me. How did you secure Hector Almond?”

“I asked him to come.”

“But, my dear Inglis, Hector, I understand has become most exclusive of late. You have simply beaten the record. To have Hector Almond at your first dinner party, and you only a month in London! Why, you can have anybody you like now!”

“Yes; I suppose he is very fashionable,” said Inglis. “His father was one of the heritors in the parish of Balsharach, and so was mine. I used to see a lot of Hector

when he was a boy at Glasgow University. He came to my house in Glasgow, and I don't see why he shouldn't come to it in London, famous and fashionable as he is."

"Now that you tell me, I remember something of that. Oh! if there's anything at all in the shape of friendship in the matter, Hector would as lief go to a pot-house as a palace. His worst enemies, who are his most intimate acquaintances, admit that with envy."

"Well, he's coming to my pot-house," said Inglis drily.

Dr. Cairncross laughed with the utmost unconcern.

"Have you heard Hector's latest nickname?" he asked.

"No."

"It was Lady Betty Macalpine told me. She caught a cold at the French Ambassador's, when Hector was there one night, and called me next day. Hector had been very brilliant, lounging about with his huge body, half-asleep or half dead you

would have said, and then blazing out into wonderful sayings and speeches ; and the French Ambassador called him Phoenix-leviathan ! ”

“ I see.”

“ And who is your other Phoenix ? ”

“ You won’t know him. Baptist Lake.”

“ You don’t mean to say so ! Good God ! I know Baptist, and what’s more, Hector knows him. Let me see now, let me see. You’re in a box, Inglis. You must stop one or the other of them at the door, or your dinner’s spoiled, and yourself the enemy of both for life.”

“ Why ? ”

“ Because Baptist Lake was for a year the *ame damnée* of Hector Almond, and is now his imitator and traducer.”

“ By Jove ! Yes. I haven’t seen Hector for some years, but there is something about Baptist like him.”

“ Baptist’s imitation is very good ; but there’s this difference. Hector’s brains are the nimblest, the most working, the best

supplied with blood, I've ever encountered ; whereas Baptist invents before and commits to memory his sayings and stories, and prepares one or two Latin quotations to serve him for the week. Oh ! he's been smoked many a time ; but he has the stoutest of hearts and the toughest of heads."

"I'll risk it," said Inglis, taking a turn across the room.

"You'll rue it all your life."

"I'll risk it," repeated Inglis, thinking deep down in his soul that this was a slight risk compared with another he was running. "But what is Mary about?"

At that moment Mrs. Meldrum was announced ; shortly after her Baptist arrived ; and still no Mrs. Inglis.

Inglis bit his lip with vexation. Five minutes more passed, and his wife had not come. Had she been in the room, the difficulty with Mrs. Meldrum would have been over by this time ; he could hardly hide his anger and chagrin.

“Your house is delightful,” said Mrs. Meldrum.

“I’m glad you like it,” he said.

Mrs. Meldrum cast a rapid look at the elegant white Boxtree furniture ; the ceiling painted like a summer sky, the azure-panelled walls, and the carpet, white, with soft blue garlands woven in it, as if thrown from the hands of tired revellers ; and she sighed with pleasure at the thought of queening it here—with regret when she glanced at her red velvet robe and red silk skirt. But doubtless the contrast between her dress and the surroundings would not be so glaring in the dining-room ; and when she returned to the drawing room she would take care to have about her two or three men, whose black coats would keep her red robe in countenance. And yet as she glanced in a mirror and saw what Baptist Lake had once called the rich pallor of her complexion and her coal-black hair, she thought to herself that nobody, no man at least, looking at her,

would have any eye for surroundings, or power to criticise.

Mrs. Meldrum after her rapid survey of the field was on the point of addressing Inglis, when Mrs. Inglis came in. There were the two groups in the room ; Inglis and Mrs. Meldrum on one hand ; with two yards between, Baptist and the Cairncrosses on the other. Mrs. Inglis went up to the latter.

“I’m so sorry,” she said ; “but, you see, I’ve been having my hair dressed, a thing I never did before.”

She had done another thing she had never done before—used a little powder and rouge and pencilled her eyebrows. This she had done twice, having washed off the cosmetics the first time in a tremor of shame. Her daughters, with her in the dressing-room, had been somewhat scandalised at first ; but they both declared when they saw her face in its natural state again that the colour made her look fifteen years younger, and insisted on a re-application.

Yet she had turned back twice on her way to the drawing-room ; and it was only after she had gone to the dining-room, and astonished the coachman-in-waiting by drinking half a pint of champagne, that she mustered courage to present herself before her husband and her guests. Once in the drawing-room she became cool and resolute, remembering the game she was playing and the heavy stake. Her hair, divided in her old Madonna fashion, rippled crisply to her temples and was coiled in a labyrinth of braids on the back of her head. She wore, as Mrs. Meldrum noticed with a twinge, a turquoise blue silk and diamonds.

Mrs. Cairncross pursed up her mouth at Mrs. Inglis's ingenuous remark. Dr. Cairncross muttered some compliment, and Baptist said "How charming !"

"Who is that very frank lady ?" asked Mrs. Meldrum in a whisper.

"That ? My wife—Mrs. Meldrum."

"Your wife," said Baptist. "I thought

Mrs. Inglis had been your daughter-in-law."

It was clever of Baptist; but Mrs. Meldrum saw that she had been tricked, and that Inglis had allowed himself to drift.

"Mr. Hector Almond!"

Baptist turned a little pale and looked suspiciously at Inglis when he heard that name, and Hector Almond failed to conceal a glance of surprise at the sight of his former friend. But they bowed to each other.

"Mrs. Inglis," said Hector Almond, "I think it is nearly a dozen years since we met, and you look two dozen years younger and more adorable than you did when I was in love with you in Glasgow. But your husband I see has grown younger too, so I must pocket up my sighs again."

There was a little hardness in Hector's voice. Baptist was a pleasanter speaker, and his regal insolence had an instantaneous fascination; but he was frequently loud

and rapid, and with him there was much conscious effort. Hector was always subdued, often careless, hesitating, recasting his sentences. It was an endless mystery to Baptist how Hector had succeeded, and he had not. They had been at Oxford together, and there Baptist, although nothing of a student, had been the leader ; and when they came to London it was Baptist who started Hector in Society. For a year they had been the closest of friends, and gone everywhere together. Then Baptist began to notice that his friend was not to be seen so often in the same houses as himself, and soon discovered that Hector was leaving him behind. At the end of their second season, they hardly met anywhere, and Hector's name had begun to be noised about. The envious said of him that he was ambitious of being a nineteenth-century Beau Brummel ; his friends said that they had never read or heard of anything like the quality or suddenness of his social success. A

fashionable writer remarked that "to be without brains, Hector Almond was probably the greatest man that ever lived"; and something like that was the current opinion. "He has the most wonderful temperament," was a common saying. "He feels and can express without troubling his head the true inwardness of everything," said an American Duchess. That was an immense portion of his success; people voted him unintellectual; they themselves were much cleverer than he and could think better; but he had temperament, instinct: thus they could admire ungrudgingly just as people used to pay deference to idiots. It was much in the same way that the wits of Queen Anne's time reconciled their pride with the cult of Shakespeare; and it is in this way too that many people are enabled to worship God—a great genius, as it were, very uneconomical, and sometimes wrong headed, but flashing out wonders.

Dr. Cairncross's account of Baptist as

Hector's *ame damnée* was a mere invention after the latter's success. And as for the imitation, it had been mutual, probably much greater on Hector's side than on Baptist's. Baptist was the actor; and it is always the simple-minded who imitate the self-conscious. There never had been any quarrel between the two; but as Hector's star rose, and his own remained barely visible above the horizon, Baptist took to maligning and avoiding his more fortunate rival. Hector heard of the ill-natured things said of him by Baptist; but nobody was able to repeat anything of a like kind emanating from him. Of course satirical remarks were invented and quoted to Baptist about himself as being Hector's; but Baptist knew from internal evidence that not one of them was authentic, and his bitter feeling increased. Three things above all made Baptist gnash his teeth when he thought of them—which was not often latterly, as his orbit and Hector's no longer intersected, nor even touched each

other ; and these were the contrast between his own gracefulness and good looks, and what he called Hector's loutishness ; that between the brilliancy and dash of his own memorised speeches and remarks, and the hesitancy, nimble as his wits were, which accompanied much of Hector's improvisation ; and that between his own elegant profligacy and Hector's obedience to what he, Baptist, considered an antiquated code.

As soon as Hector Almond arrived, Inglis hurried his guests to the dining-room. They sat in the following order : Inglis, Mrs. Meldrum, Baptist, Mrs. Cairncross, Hector, Mrs. Inglis, Dr. Cairncross. The coachman-in-waiting, a boy, the table-maid, and the housemaid attended. Mrs. Meldrum was happy to find her red robe a match for the dark hangings of the room and the Bostree antique oak furniture.

Baptist talked to Mrs. Meldrum for a few minutes, gradually raising his voice until it was audible to everybody.

“ Did I ever tell you about the substitute for soul, Mrs. Meldrum ? ” he asked, in a moment of general silence.

“ No,” said Mrs. Meldrum, inattentive, bitter, fierce.

“ I think I told you, Mrs. Inglis ? ”

“ Oh, yes, Mr. Lake,” said Mrs. Inglis. “ It was very nice.” Mrs. Inglis said this in a tone of indifferent patronage which Baptist himself could not have beaten ; and Baptist wondered if there was an actual plot against him.

“ I don’t know it ; tell it to me, Mr. Lake,” said Mrs. Cairncross, who had been waiting anxiously for an opportunity to say something.

“ Shall I ? ” said Baptist ; and he told his story of “ The Substitute for Soul.” Then he dexterously introduced his passage about London which he had recited to Islay in the drive from Pilgrimstow. “ The dreadful entrails of the place,” “ you cannot crush it into an epigram,” and “ do you know, I sometimes think that, centuries hence, some

great painter will paint a wonderful picture, some great novelist will write a wonderful description, of London, each as unlike the actual city as Turner's or Flaubert's Carthage is unlike Dido's town; but the contemporaries of these artists will have a truer idea than we have of immensity, of innumerable crowds, of frantic expenditure, of pleasure and misery, of greatness and meanness, because they will imagine what we must contemplate."

"Very admirable," said Hector, and Baptist's eyes sparkled with pleasure in spite of himself.

"Say something, Hector," whispered Mrs. Inglis, with the familiarity of a dozen years before.

"Mr. Lake is talking so well that there is no need," said Hector in an ordinary tone.

"Whether do you like London or Paris best?" asked Dr. Cairncross, not because he was a fool, but because he liked these stock subjects.

“It is all one to me,” said Baptist. “I say with Horace—

‘*Jam mœchus Romæ, jam mallet doctus Athenis
Vivere.*’”

“I prefer Paris,” said the doctor.

“Oh, doctor, I thought you were such a patriot!” said Mrs. Inglis.

“I’m not ashamed to say,” rejoined the doctor,—again, not because he was a fool, but because—if he had a reason at all—he had been for a month in Paris, and had made up his mind never to return, “I’m not ashamed to say that I prefer the Bois de Boulogne to Hyde Park, and almost any boulevard to Piccadilly.”

“Ah, well,” said Baptist, “you remind me of some lines in Propertius—

‘*Tuscus ego et Tuscis orior ; nec pœnitet inter
Prœlia Volsinos deseruisse focos.
Hæc me turba juvat ; nec templo lætor eburno ;
Romanum satis est posse videre forum.*’”

Inglis had not recognised the first quotation, but he did the second: “*Tuscus ego*

et Tuscis orior"—he remembered the sound of that quite well; yet Baptist made the lines so musical that Inglis was too well pleased to feel any resentment at the man's quackery. Even Hector Almond, although well aware of Baptist's want of scholarship, was thrilled by the soft, rich voice, and the strange unnecessary pathos thrown into "*nec templo lætor eburno*," and wondered that a man of ability and of instinctive delicacy in many things should make uncalled-for pretensions to learning he had never possessed.

Baptist, pleased with himself and the effect he was producing, forgot his suspicions of a conspiracy, and said some more of his best things. A remark about religion roused Dr. Cairncross's Scotch prejudices.

"I prefer the conventional opinion," said the doctor. "Don't you think you are too extravagant?"

"It is impossible, Dr. Cairncross, to be too extravagant," said Baptist. "The most imperative of duties is to be extravagant,

to be unconventional. The nostrums of the agitator and the place-hunter would have no sale if people knew how to be themselves. To be unconventional is to be one's self, and is therefore to be happy—is the only happiness, in fact; and that accounts for the small sum of happiness in the world. The men of most leisure and wealth are as unaware as the most ignorant and meanest in the land that the only source of delight is in being different. Perhaps one in a million knows it. Unconventionality, extravagance, doctor, is the soul transcending limits. You will find that the few accidental moments of happiness in the life of the world are those of extravagant thoughts and deeds, and since the whole duty of man is to be happy, it is imperative to be unconventional."

"It is not so," said Hector Almond; and Baptist, who had forgotten the presence of his successful rival, started at the sound of his low, slow voice, with the metal in it. "It is not so," said Hector. "It is

impossible to be unconventional. Suppose we can escape time by committing suicide, it is only flying to another convention. One cannot avoid being born—childhood, manhood, old age. You cannot choose to be in Saturn instead of the Earth; you cannot even select which age you will live in, nor what countryman you will be. You have to accept the past of the world; your very parents are out of your selection. You have to accept flesh and blood, hope, fear, desire, language. You must eat and drink, you must sit and walk and sleep. You must be born and die, and wear furs in winter and silk in summer. It is impossible to be unconventional. A man may eschew railways and busses, for example, and use hansoms as his only means of locomotion; but he has to move, or be moved, if he wishes to get from one place to another; and that is the convention. We have no choice at all. We can't be unconventional; and these externals, whose form seems to lie in

our control—dress, speech, daily habits or want of habits, are even less ours to command in their mode than in their essence, less in our control than the past, or the farthest star. We drift into them. We seem to choose a grey glove or a tan, but it is a whim of God's, not ours, we obey. Our habits are less substantial than our dreams. No man ever did an unconventional thing. It is impossible to act outside of law; and if it were possible to do an unconventional thing, the moment of its execution would make it a convention, and call into being a new system of law, a new universe for a home to it."

"Why, you are a Calvinist!" said Inglis.

"I would never call myself anything in 'ist,'" said Hector.

"No; but I see now," rejoined Inglis, "what I mean by my theory of inferiority. Those men who are obedient slaves of law have the world at their feet; and those men who seem to be superior and rebel

and become martyrs on the one hand, and terrible examples on the other, are disobedient to law. The damned and the saved : the saved are those that struggle against law ; the damned are those that obey it blindly."

"There are no such distinctions, I think," said Hector, "as those between inferiority and superiority, the saved and the damned ; they are on all-fours with conventional and unconventional."

"Damnation and salvation," began Baptist, but Hector said to Mrs. Inglis, "I have not been north for a long time. Does Kelvinside expand ?"

"Oh, yes, it grows."

"Have there been many changes in Glasgow ?"

"Not many, I think. They have a steeple on the University now — and that's all I remember."

"And Dixon's Blazes," said Hector. "They have gone out of the night sky for ever, I'm told."

“Have they? I really didn’t know.”

“I hope I am mistaken. It is the last thing a Glasgow man can forget—the homely blush at night in the southern sky.”

Several times Baptist tried to lead the talk; but Hector kept it steadily in hand, and brought Mrs. Cairncross into it and the doctor; and even Mrs. Meldrum half forgot the gridiron on which she writhed under the sweet influence of that quiet, sane gossip which most people think they despise.

When the ladies had gone Hector succeeded very deftly in keeping Baptist out of the talk by starting Dr. Cairncross on an account of a new disease of the throat just discovered in teachers. Baptist was amazed and alarmed at himself; he had not deemed it possible that he could be overpowered by another personality. He had had the worst of more than one encounter with Baptist during the days of their intimacy, but had always been able to capitulate with the honours of war. Now he felt utterly shent, his standard and

his side-arms gone. As he found the word taken from him again and again he gave up the attempt to speak, and quite lost confidence in himself for the time being. All his best things were as if they had not been said. It was enough to drive a man mad to have been the life and soul of a dinner party, and then at the end of it for somebody to step in and reap, at a single stroke, all one's laurels. He was so dismayed at his defeat and so irritated by Hector's presence that he left the house when the gentlemen went to the drawing-room ; and, forgetting altogether his suspicions of an organised attempt to put him down, was unable to console himself with the saying that anyone can be crushed by a plot. His humour was not much improved by the sardonic gleam in Inglis's eyes as they parted. This Scotchman, whom he had wanted to make a butt of, had seen him silenced ; and had also, although Baptist's conceit did not dream of that, found him out a mere farceur,

very pleasant, but on a level with a hired entertainer, committing his pieces and his quotations to memory, and making one programme last throughout the week.

Had Baptist waited only five minutes more he would have seen a thing happen in the drawing-room which might have given him a subject for his next week's story.

"You used to sing," said Hector to Mrs. Inglis. "Will you sing one of your old songs?"

"Surely," said Mrs. Inglis in a ringing voice that startled her husband and Mrs. Meldrum, talking closely over an album. Mrs. Cairncross put up her glasses, and watched Mrs. Inglis, who certainly went to the piano too precipitately.

"There's something the matter with Mrs. Inglis," she whispered to her husband. "This attempt to be somebody all of a sudden, and to be so very young too, is turning her head."

"Mary, do you know what you're doing?"

asked Inglis, his wife not having played or sung, to his knowledge, for years.

“Yes, John,” said Mrs. Inglis, “I practised all forenoon.”

“That’s not naïveté,” said Mrs. Meldrum, with a sarcastic glance at Inglis. “Your wife means something.”

Inglis lay back in his chair with his hands in his pockets and his heart in his mouth.

It was Longfellow’s “Bridge” that Mrs. Inglis sang, to an old, forgotten tune. One of her first songs, it had been a favourite of her husband’s. From it she had first felt something of what poetry is; and she still thought it a very exquisite poem. Her voice was a light contralto, but the wine she had drunk, and the wild passion her heart was in at the presence in her house of the woman she thought her husband preferred, gave a depth and richness to her singing which it had not possessed even in her best days. The look of disdain with which Mrs. Meldrum had recognised the

words died away as the song, gradually mastered by the memories it recalled, and the thought of the present horror, became burdened with the misery of the singer. The Cairncrosses looked inexpressibly shocked ; and the doctor, at first distressed, soon grew collected, anticipating hysteria or a fit of some kind. Hector stood beside the piano.

“ How often, oh, how often,
In the days that have gone by,
I had stood on that bridge at midnight,
And gazed on that wave and sky !

“ How often, oh, how often
I had wished that the ebbing tide
Would bear me away on its bosom
O'er the ocean wild and wide.

“ For my heart was hot and restless,
And my life was full of care,
And the burden laid upon me
Seemed——”

Here her voice broke ; her eyes, dim from the beginning of the song, were flooded ; and her hands fell discordantly on the keyboard.

“Oh, I can’t bear it!” she screamed. What sanctity had an evening party—this evening party—for her? She rose and rushed from the room, her mouth twisted with anguish, and the tears pouring from her eyes.

Instinctively the Cairncrosses and Mrs. Meldrum looked to Hector Almond. He simply said, “Good-night, Mr. Inglis. I am going on to Count Borodino’s.”

The Cairncrosses left at once also. The doctor, taking his cue from Hector, made no reference to Mr. Inglis; but Mrs. Cairncross hoped there was nothing really wrong.

Inglis was left alone with Mrs. Meldrum.

XIV.

AGNES and Lizzie had been sitting on the stairs, eating raw tomatoes and listening to their mother's song. When it suddenly ceased unfinished, and some one left the drawing-room, they hurried "with pretty and with swimming gait" to their rooms, and leaving their doors ajar peered out. Seeing their mother alone and in distress they came to her with tender sympathy, but she kissed them both twice and bade them leave her.

Hardly had Mrs. Inglis sunk into her rocking-chair than she heard the departure as she thought of all her guests. What a scandal she had caused! She loathed herself for what she had done. She felt as if she would like to hang herself. How weak she was! How very weak! How could she expect her husband to love her again

and she so weak? The triumph she had meditated to end so! The painting and the hairdressing, and the practising!—she blushed fiery red for shame. She had made things worse and worse; she had set the skeleton a-dancing in the drawing-room; with her tears she had rinsed the soiled linen in the face of her guests. What could she do now? Whatever could she do? It was very easy to decide. Go straight to her husband and on her knees beg his pardon.

But he was not alone in the drawing-room—Agnes and Lizzie doubtless. It was a woman's voice that sounded—a woman talking so intensely, so hotly, that she and he failed to hear the movement of the listener on the landing. It was neither of her daughters. It was Mrs. Meldrum.

Upstairs to her room again she hurried—to the rocking-chair in which she had suckled all her babies. If her mind would only rest; if she could only get peace for a minute she could bear it better. She thrust

her handkerchief into her mouth to prevent her screaming again. Perhaps he and she were talking of her; of her painting herself to look young and desirable in her husband's eyes; of the novice's music she had sung, and the words which hard-headed, sensual people sneered at, but which had been too powerful for her. Perhaps they were laughing at her, and calling her childish. She! And she had borne all her children without a cry, and nursed them at her own breast, every one in that rocking-chair. If she only had a baby now, a little child of her very own again, to grow up slowly into a handsome boy or girl, she could bear her husband's desertion. She thought of her first child that had died, and how she herself had wished to die; and that reminded her of a wonderful present one of her father's cottars had given her on her marriage. She remembered well the cheerful solemnity with which the white-haired old woman had undone a bundle in the parlour in her

father's house, and laid before her a grave-dress of the finest linen.

"Ye were aye my bairn," the cottar had said, "an' I made this for ye wi' my ain hands. Many a time when I hae' seen ye fleein' about the country-side wi' young Inglis o' Balshara', I hae' said tae mysel', 'Gin I could mak' my lassie's bride-sark I would be a prood woman.' But I couldna' mak' it sprush enough, kennin' naethin' about yer fancy sewin'. So, I e'en sewed a grave sark, an' there's no a stitch agley in't. An' ye'll promise tae wear't when the time comes, Mary. Death's no' sae warm a nee'bour as a husband, lass; but ye'll lie langer by him, an' no' need to change yer claes till ye get a whiter robe than folk can bleach here awa'."

She had taken the woman's present without any deep feeling, knowing that her old friend, and other cottars' wives, kept grave-clothes in their chests of drawers ready for themselves and their husbands; that they took them out, washed and

bleached them every summer, and folded them away again, reverently, cheerfully : so to her there had not been anything wonderful in the gift. Then she thought again as she had thought two nights before, of the dulness of her apprehension, and the sudden change that marriage brought. But it was all over and done.

“ A shroud ! a shroud ! ” she said.

From a drawer in her wardrobe she took the grave-clothes her old friend had given her—she had never gone anywhere without them—and spread them out on the bed. Snowy white, and so cool, they were. Her husband would kiss her in her coffin, if not till then ; and his tears would fall on her pale calm face. She lifted the head-cloth, and putting it round her temples, sat in her rocking-chair once more. She was now the bride of death ; and the imagination of her coffin, and of the burial, deep in the earth far from every fear and care, solaced her. Her thoughts found their way

back to the past, and she saw a funeral party she had attended when she was a mere girl. After the burial she had gone, uninvited as a child will, to the cottage of the new-made widower, and found the neighbours gathered together to condole, with whisky and plain food. She had been surprised at nothing, but she remembered now how strangely cheerful the talk had been. The good qualities of the deceased were often referred to, humorous stories were told, and one old woman, a sort of character, was asked to sing. A verse of her song, which recurred as an irregular chorus, had remained in Mrs. Inglis's memory, although perhaps she hadn't recalled it twice before, and certainly had never repeated it. She went over it in her mind, but it would not come right; she hadn't the rhymes; and one line halted. She crooned at it, her lips moving like a mad woman's, until she struck out a verse that chimed. Then she tried to remember the tune, and when she had a chant that

satisfied her, she sang the verse in a low tone :

“ When I was young and in my prime
 He happit me in his arms twa,
But noo’ I’m past my loving time,
 And I maun lie wi’ my face tae the wa’.”

Many times over she sang it, staring in front of her. A shadow moved, but she did not turn towards it : it might be anything—a ghost ; it might be Death himself : she was indifferent. The shadow moved again, and stood directly in front of her. It was almost a minute before her vision could resolve the shadow into substance ; then she saw, watching her, her husband, pale and astonished.

“ Mary—Mary ! ” he said.

She rose trembling, and burst into a laugh.

“ Have you come—back to me ? ” she said, her voice rent to fragments.

“ Mary—Mary,” was all he could say, forcing her into the chair again.

Her tears had streaked her cheeks with

powder and rouge ; and, with the head-cloth and her eyes red from weeping, her face had the strangest appearance.

She put her arms round her husband as he stood by her, and tried to make him sit on her knee, but he withdrew from her grasp. First he pulled off the head-cloth ; then he put a sponge and water into a basin, and knelt with it before her. She washed her face and dipped it in the cool water, and her hands and her wrists. Then he gave her a towel ; and when she had used it, she tried again to make him sit on her knee. But he repelled her, and went to the other side of the bed from her, and leaning against a post tried to speak. At first he couldn't. Then he burst out quite broken.

“God help me !” he said. “I didn't know what I was doing. I thought myself somebody, Mary. I thought myself—I thought——”

“Dinna', John, dinna'. Say nothing about it. Come to me.”

He fell on the bed at the sound of the Scotch, but pulled himself together at once.

“Let me speak, Mary. You know I had my own notions of things; thought my own thoughts, and went my own way. And they flattered me these people: how original I was; and the woman made love to me; and the man kept telling me—he kept telling me that a man ought to love more than one woman, else his mind grew dull; that all great men had mistresses——”

“I would have died, John; I would have died. I was dying.”

“And the woman argued against him, supposing me unmarried, and defended marriage. And I saw her every day, and she turned my head; and I thought—I meant—God knows what I meant!”

“But you don’t mean it now, John?”

“It was all this cursed Calvinism!”

Mrs. Inglis laughed through her tears; and a smile flickered round her husband’s mouth too.

“Oh, damn all words, Mary! They have nearly driven me mad. They have nearly made me break your heart and my own—all for a pitiful paradox; because I thought myself cleverer than others. But the woman was honest. She didn’t know I was married; and she paid me home just now; she paid me home; and I think she’ll kill Baptist Lake. But what I’m to say or do now, Mary, I don’t know. I’ve been unfaithful in my heart.”

“Dinna’, John, like a man. Dinna’.”

“When you came into the room, into the drawing room, and I saw what you had done to your hair and your cheeks——”

She would have interrupted him here again; but they were both choked by their tears.

——“I saw what a coward and ass I had been. I understood you. I dined off my own heart. And your song! I think, maybe, I’ve suffered almost as much as

you—only to-day I mean, not all these days—since you came in with the rouge on your cheeks, and the barber's fingers in your hair."

In a moment a shower of pins fell on the floor; her brown hair was all about her; and he, on his knees, buried his face in her lap, and clasped her waist.

"Mary, Mary!"

"Hush!"

A knock at the door—the open door, for Inglis had left it wide—startled them. The housemaid, keeping discreetly out of sight, announced that Mr. Islay had come home, and wished to see his father and mother. "Miss Salerne is with him," the servant added.

"Miss Salerne?" said Inglis, going to the door.

"Yes, sir. Mr. Islay told me to say that Miss Salerne was with him."

"Very well. Do you know anything about Miss Salerne, Mary?"

"No, John."

“Salerne — Salerne,” repeated Inglis, with a very rueful countenance. “It sounds like the ballet. I’ve heard it before.”

“You had a stevedore of that name in Glasgow.”

“Of course! By Jove! If it should be his daughter. They left Glasgow shortly before we did.”

“We’ll go down and see,” said Mrs. Inglis.

She put up her hair rapidly in her own old way, and Inglis smoothed his. Then they kissed each other without a word more, and went down to the drawing-room.

“Well, Islay, have you had your adventure?” said Inglis, shaking hands with his son.

Mrs. Inglis kissed Islay, and made a very slight inclination to Rose.

“Yes,” said Islay; “and it’s not over yet. This is Rose Salerne. I was to have been married to her to-day, but her father’s

in prison. You remember him in Glasgow—he used to work for you; and I will have to go to prison too, it seems. So father, mother, will you keep Rose till I get out?”

His father was speechless with astonishment; and his mother exclaimed “Islay Inglis!”

“This is an adventure with a vengeance,” said Inglis at last.

“Do you remember what Baptist Lake said?—that we should all have adventures,” said Mrs. Inglis.

“Yes,” replied her husband. “He took care of that. Won’t you sit down, Miss Salerne?”

Rose, dressed in her every-day muslin, had been standing, breathing somewhat quickly for her, looking, with her flushed cheeks, and flashing eyes, and her tall, well-developed figure, fully five years older than Islay. She sat down immediately at Inglis’s ungallant invitation.

“In the first place, Islay,” said his

father ; “you must tell us why you are to be imprisoned.”

Islay, whose nerves were strung to the utmost tension, told with remarkable clearness and succinctness the whole course of his adventures in Pilgrimstow and Belminster. Whenever he mentioned Rose’s name, there was so much of adoring passion in his voice, and in the blush deepening the hue of his ruddy cheek and the fire of his eyes, that the hearts of his father and mother ached for the boy ; and before his narrative ended the hope of both was to find Rose Salerne not wholly unworthy of the love she had inspired.

“But you seem to have got off?” said Inglis.

“I did get off ; but Slowse, the cabman that drove us, has turned Queen’s evidence. It was in the papers to-night ; so they are certain to be after me.”

“And Mrs. Tiplady, too,” said Rose.

“I don’t know,” said Islay. “Slowse may have known nothing about her.”

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“And what about yourself, Miss Salerne?” said Inglis.

“Me!”

“Rose!” exclaimed Islay. “They cannot arrest her; she knew nothing about it, and she never served in the shop. They might arrest Mrs. Macalister, perhaps.”

“Mrs. Macalister knew nothing about it either,” said Rose.

“And where have you been since you returned from Belminster, Islay?” asked Inglis.

“Oh, I took a room in Pilgrimstow to be beside Rose until her father should get out of prison. But now I’m to be arrested too. There’s no need to be dreadfully serious about it. I shall give myself up to-morrow; father will go bail for me—won’t you, father? Then we’ll all be fined—they can’t imprison us without the option of a fine for smuggling; and it’s all over. It’s not worth while thinking any more about it, just now. But Rose, father—

Rose, mother. Can she stay here? — Say she can stay here.”

“We’ll see,” said Mrs. Inglis.

She questioned Rose about her age, her mother, her education; very callously, Islay thought—was she not there for them to see, the loveliest woman in the world? Rose answered all Mrs. Inglis’s queries in her meaningless girl’s voice, so little in keeping with her physical maturity, the splendour and seeming high intelligence of her eyes.

“Well,” said Mrs. Inglis, when she had ended her catechising, “your father and I will have to talk about this, Islay. You might go to the dining-room for a little. Miss Salerne, would you not like some supper?”

“Yes,” Rose said. She was hungry, and so was Islay.

When the young folks had left the room, Inglis said, “The girl’s a fool: she has no brains.”

“I don’t know that,” said Mrs. Inglis.

"It's mere calf-love between the pair."

"Our love was calf-love to begin with, John."

"Calf-love?—first love! And it's calf-love, still to go on with, Mary," said Inglis, seating himself beside his wife. "There's no love except calf-love; any other love is sophisticated. I love you like a boy, my dear."

"My dear boy."

"Like a girl, Mary? Do you love me like a girl?"

"I love you as I loved you when you had made me your wife. Yours—all—to break in pieces, if you want."

"Always be a girl. A woman is strongest when she yields most."

"But I always yielded, John. I was always glad to."

"Let it pass."

"We'll have this girl to stay with us in the meantime, won't we?"

"I suppose we must. But she seems to be stupid."

"I don't think so."

"She has nothing to say. She's very pretty certainly, and looks tremendously intelligent. But she talks like a girl of ten. I'm afraid I have trusted Islay too far; he would have married her without our knowledge. Still I understand him; it is his concern alone, he thinks; he has made up his mind to it, and wants nobody's permission. I understand him."

"He is his father's son."

"But the girl is no match for him in brains."

"I doubt that. I watched her, I studied her, and I'm sure she's very intelligent."

"She's unutterably so then."

"Now that's truer than you mean. Don't you remember what a goose I was when you married me?"

"You? Why, you were as bright and clever as you are now, and almost as lovely."

"Oh! be a boy; but don't kiss me so

loudly. Even very little boys know that quiet kisses are the sweetest. No! But I *was* very dull when you married me. I knew nothing, understood nothing, felt nothing ”

“ Felt nothing ? ”

“ Nothing, except that I liked to be near you. I was just like this girl. You didn't see it, just as Islay doesn't see it. He thinks her as wonderful in every way as you thought me. And so she is ; but she needs to be married before it will appear. Now, I'll say something very clever. Listen, John. A girl is like a block of marble ; and a husband is like the sculptor that carves the woman out of her—only visible to him in the girl.”

“ Ah ! But that's only true of some women. ’

“ Of some women ? Perhaps. Now, I'll say something very daring. Shut your eyes. Listen. But you must shut your eyes. It only applies to—Oh, for a word ! —but keep your eyes shut—to women of

sanguine complexions — shut! — to girls whose bodies overwhelm their souls, till marriage delivers them, and then they love much.”

“The best kind of women.”

“That was me, and that’s Rose Salerne. It’s not stupidity ; it’s innocence. And she’s such a lovely girl.”

“She is. Seventeen—and Islay about sixteen. Well, in five years they’ll know each other better.”

“Islay won’t wait five years.”

“For some time at any rate. They may change their minds.”

“God forbid! We mustn’t let them change their minds. I see things to-night very clearly. Of course they would change their minds in five years—in less—many times, perhaps ; and become cynical and sophisticated—that’s your word ; just because they had learned to distrust their hearts. That’s what makes cynics, isn’t it? and woman-haters, and woman-betrayers—men who have betrayed themselves, as

most men do. Oh, it's so simple! If I were absolute queen of a country I would make a law requiring the marriage of every pair of first lovers. First, I would make a law requiring everybody to be strong and healthy, and that would insure that everybody would love a first time, because people often at present never know first love. I mean they are unhealthy, weak, too clever—I've known lots of them, conscious of all love's things except the one thing needful before they ever experienced it; and so——"

"What is the one thing needful?"

"I don't know, dear. Nobody knows; but true lovers know that they have it. Now, you understand me. Let Islay grow up a man among ten thousand. Married, a boy, to his first love, he will never learn to distrust his own heart, but be a king like you, for you are a king beside all the men I know."

"A sorry king, Mary."

"King John! Ah! but I love you more,

because you thought to be false. Hush ! Come ; we'll go and talk pleasantly to these two wanderers, and let them have their own way as far as possible."

"A year—we'll ask them to wait a year."

"Very well."

"You're very strange to-night, Mary ?"

"Hadn't I cause to be ? Hush ! No, no ! I shall never say—I shall never think of it again. Forgive me for this once."

They found Islay and Rose devouring some remnants of the dinner with the placid enjoyment of young animals. Mrs. Inglis seated herself close to Rose, and laid her hand on her shoulder now and again while talking to her in occasional whispers during the conversation between Islay and his father.

"I read," said Inglis, "of the death of Inglebeard in the papers, and the arrest of the smugglers, but never thought of connecting you with the matter."

"I wish I had seen the death of Ingle-

beard," said Islay; "but I escaped. I slept all night in the old man's cave."

"It was a real adventure, then?"

"I think so. At any rate it's the only adventure of the kind I am ever likely to have, as I'm going to be married."

"You've made up your mind about that?"

"Yes, father."

"Your mother and I think it might be the best thing you could do—in a year or so."

"In a year or so! But we want to get married now. Don't we, Rose?"

"Yes," said Rose, shyly.

"But consider, Islay. At sixteen what kind of a husband will you make? your education not half done, with no experience of the world—not fully grown either? You'd better bide a wee."

Islay put down his knife and fork, and pushed back his chair.

"Father," he said, pressing his hands together, "I want to get married now. I'm only a boy, I know—a schoolboy; but how wonderful and splendid it would be for

a schoolboy to be married. I remember when I was ten I cried a whole day in Glasgow because you wouldn't take me to see the Tower of London. I thought at the time that there was nothing else in the world worth seeing. But now I don't care. I haven't been to see it yet, although I've been in London a month. I feel if I don't get married now as if my heart would break. It's not just to be married; it's to be married to Rose I want; and it wouldn't be the same a year after this, because I would have been thinking of marriage all the time, and imagining myself married. But now when it's new and fresh and great! Father—think for me; mother, speak for me. I need to be married; it's right I should be married. Rose, speak; try and speak. I can say nothing like what I feel, Rose."

"I should so like to be married too," said Rose, shyly—"To Islay," she added, more shyly, more wistfully. "I love Islay," she went on, as nobody else seemed inclined

to speak at the moment; "and I'll love him better yet. My father said so."

"Your father, child?" said Mrs. Inglis.

"Yes."

"Your father's a wise man, then."

"And he said too if he had all the world to choose from for a husband for me, he would take Islay."

"But you mustn't let Islay know these things, my dear," said Mrs. Inglis. "He's vain enough already."

"What I can't get over, Islay," said his father, "is the state of your education."

"My education is only beginning, I know that; but I want to educate myself in my own way, and marriage is the first lesson I've set myself! You've taught me to be independent, father, and you mustn't thwart me now. I'm sick of schools; I've never learnt anything in them. I could read before I went, and anything I know worth knowing was not learnt in text-books."

"Well, then, suppose marriage is the first lesson. What do you intend to be the second?"

“Oh, father! We shall have a child, I hope.”

The gravity of the boy made it quite impossible for his parents to laugh. Rose hung her head, but hardly blushed.

“Yes,” said Inglis slowly, “that will be the second lesson.”

“My good, brave, dear boy,” said Mrs. Inglis, kissing Rose.

“Since you’re facing life in this way,” said Inglis, “I feel certain you don’t mean to neglect your subordinate studies.”

“Of course not,” said Islay. “I’ll tell you what I mean to do. But first, can Rose and I get married after the trial’s over, mother?”

“Yes.”

“Father?”

“Yes.”

“Thank you.”

Islay pulled in his chair, and resumed his knife and fork; and Rose, who had desisted out of sympathy, began to eat also.

“And your educational plan?” said Inglis.

“We will go to Paris for a year,” replied Islay; “to Leipsic and Dresden for a year; to Florence and Rome for a year, and to Spain for a year; and come home to England, just in our majority you see, knowing Europe, and its languages and its literatures. That will be better for me than Oxford, and better for Rose than Girton.”

“By Jove, it will!”

“Oh, I know several boys that would like to do that. I thought of asking you a year ago, but I didn’t see how it was to be done, as I couldn’t stand a tutor. But a wife is better than a tutor.”

“A wife is better than a tutor!”

Islay himself smiled, and his father and mother laughed outright.

“But we will see you now and again during these years?” said Mrs. Inglis.

“Surely,” said her husband. “The second lesson must begin in my house.—Come, Rose, and let me see you.”

Rose went obediently to Mr. Inglis, who held her at arm’s length.

“You’re a beauty ; you are a beauty,” he said, embracing her.

Then he led her to Islay, and made them join hands. And he said, “God bless you, my dear children !” and Mrs. Inglis said, “God bless you, my dear children !”

“Now it’s one o’clock—it’s after one,” cried Mr. Inglis. “To bed, to bed !”

Mrs. Inglis took Rose’s arm, and said she would show her to a little room beside her two daughters—her other two daughters ; and get her a night-dress.

“But I have my things with me,” said Rose.

“What !”

“Yes,” said Islay ; “I made her bring them.”

“You’re a lad !” said Mrs. Inglis. “And what have you been doing for clothes all these days ? You took none with you.”

“I bought clean shirts and things when I needed them,” said Islay.

“Eh ! you are a lad, Islay !” said his mother, pinching his ear.

XV.

WHEN Baptist Lake left Lancaster Gardens he went straight to his hotel, drank a quantity of brandy, wrote a letter to Mrs. Tiplady, went out again, walked to Hyde Park Corner, and slowly up Piccadilly. As the moon went down behind the houses he kissed his hand to her, and bade her "Good night."

Baptist was a member of three other clubs besides the Middle-class, and he visited them all that night, gathering about him in each of them a number of young men to whom he told his story of the Substitute for Soul, and made his quotations from Horace and Propertius, supplying humorous translations. The applause of his young acquaintances soon brought him into thorough good humour with himself.

About one in the morning he went to the Middle-class Club for supper, and, finding

that it was a "musical night," elected to remain there till bedtime. He looked about for Mrs. Meldrum, thinking to enjoy a passage of arms with her, but she was not to be seen. On musical nights in the Middle-class Club, the best orchestra and the best singers to be had for money entertained the members and their guests from one till five. Baptist, with immense capacity for enjoyment, and almost no critical power, revelled in any kind of music, and sat out the whole programme in the great crimson-and-gold saloon of the Club; drank two bottles of Rudesheimer, and smoked fifty cigarettes. Then he walked to the Park in the cool morning air, crystalline even in London, and up Piccadilly again to Applegarth's; took a cold bath, and slept soundly till three on Thursday afternoon. Having breakfasted he drove to Pilgrimstow, arriving at the "Rose and Crown" shortly after five.

Pilgrimstow Market wore its forlornest aspect. The shops were nearly all shut, for

Thursday afternoon was the shopkeepers' weekly half-holiday. The short street in which the crowd had surged and whirled on Saturday night was almost entirely deserted, and bits of paper, orange-peel, and cabbage-blades littered the pavement and the roadway. The railway-bridge across which Baptist had seen the train speeding away to Heaven, and the signal-box that had looked like a great glass of Rudesheimer, brimming over with gaslight and the sunset, were mean and grimy and rusty. Baptist took it all in at a glance, and shivered as he entered the private bar of the "Rose and Crown." He shut the door behind him, sat down on the cushioned bench, lit a cigarette and smoked slowly. No laughter and loud talk filled the other compartments; the buzzing of flies was quite audible. Baptist noticed the mirror, and went to it as delightedly as if he had never seen one before. He took off his hat, ran his fingers through his copper-coloured hair, and donned his hat again,

adjusting it carefully with the slight tilt forward and the still slighter inclination to one side. Then he stared himself complacently in the face, and turned his side to the mirror, and tried to get a glimpse of his shoulders. Just as he resumed his seat, Florrie—not Mrs. Tiplady this time—entered from the front of the inn.

“Ah, Florrie!” said Baptist. “What has gone wrong with Pilgrimstow? The street out there looks as if it had been swept by the plague. It would require a dead-bell and a funeral to make it tolerable.”

“’Oliday, sir,” said Florrie. “The green-grocers is away a-worshippin’ the greens, and the butchers a-skippin’ with the lambs”

“And is Mrs. Tiplady a-drinking with the drunks?”

“Oh, no sir! Mrs. Tiplady never takes an ’oliday. It’s all-l-’oliday with her. She’s gone to Garland ’All.”

“How long ago?”

“Half-an-hour, sir.”

“Ah! I am rather before the time I

said I would be. Doubtless she expected to be back before my arrival."

Baptist pressed the gold nob of his cane against his nose and meditated. It was still three weeks to quarter-day, and his money was done again. He had written Mrs. Tiplady to get him three hundred pounds, and the question with him now was, whether he should, as he had threatened, go to Garland Hall, and attempt to have an explanation with his father. It would be a simple matter to say that he had only come in their mutual interests, as he was certain Mrs. Tiplady was cheating them both. Having once got his father to talk with him, he might lead him on to other subjects. Yes, he would go. This would be the third trial he had made to see his father since their final separation ten years before ; and it might succeed.

"I shall go and meet Mrs. Tiplady," he said.

As he was leaving Florrie said, "'Ave you 'eard sir, wot 'appened the Salernes?"

“The Salernes?”

“The girl as you talked to on Saturday, and her father.”

“I remember. Well, has young Inglis run off with Rose?”

“’E ’ave, sir! ’Ow did you guess it? An’ her father’s in jail for smugglin’, an’ Mrs. Macalister’s bolted to-day. Gone ’ome to bonny Scotland, an’ the shop’s shut. She did take the bloomin’ ’ump, sir, when Rose went off. Oh, she was bad! It was worse than Sunday cigars, she said, worse than Sunday smugglin’. ’Ell was openin’ at her feet, an’ the hangels of God hascendin’ and descendin’. So she went to Glasgow. She’s mad, she is. But the langwidge, an’ the workin’ of herself up, an’ the coalin’ of herself with snuff——”

“Mrs. Macalister must have been very charming,” interrupted Baptist. “I am sorry she has thought it prudent to retire to Glasgow, for much as I should like to meet her, I shall certainly not follow her.”

Without waiting for Florrie’s reply,

Baptist left the "Rose and Crown" and drove in his hansom to his father's house. The gate was open, and also the door of the lodge, although the lodge-keeper was not to be seen. And the house door was open too when he came to it, although there was no servant in the hall. Baptist's thoughts, which had gone away back to his boyhood, were recalled to the present by this unusual appearance of carelessness. He wondered a little, but concluded that his father, originally a man of forms and courtesies, had grown indifferent in his old age. As he ascended the broad stairs he heard shrill voices and prolonged laughter coming from his father's room. Again he paused and listened attentively. What could have happened? Should he enter his father's presence, or should he go back and wait for Mrs. Tiplady? He failed to distinguish his father's voice. Perhaps his father was ill; perhaps he was dead. He decided to enter.

This is what had happened. About a

quarter of an hour before Baptist arrived, just as Mrs. Tiplady went through the iron gate in the Enfield Road, the lodge-keeper, who had been so uncivil to her on her last visit, darted after her, passed her, ran on in front, and entered the house, leaving the door open. Mrs. Tiplady, in her anxiety to know what was toward, did not pause to close the door, but hurried upstairs to Sir Henry's room. There she found the lodge-keeper and Sir Henry's two domestics standing together in the middle of the floor, with Sir Henry, in the plain office-chair beside the Heppel-white table, staring in astonishment. A chop and a bottle of wine, Sir Henry's simple dinner, were on the table.

As soon as Mrs. Tiplady appeared, Sir Henry rose and stepped feebly towards her.

"My dear Mrs. Tiplady," he said, "do you know what has gone wrong with my servants? See how they have arrayed themselves against me."

The male domestic, an old man dressed in rusty black, with unshaven cheeks and tangled grey hair, stood about a pace in advance of the female domestic and the lodge-keeper. The lineaments of the three were as unhuman as thirty years' domestic service could make faces originally mean ; and their rigid attitudes, compressed lips, and lowered brows, indicated that their master had rightly divined their intention.

"I am very glad you have come, Mrs. Tiplady," continued Sir Henry, when his visitor had taken a seat, and he himself had resumed his office-chair. "I can't imagine what these three want ; and it's well that I should have a friend with me."

"We have come, Sir Henery," said the male domestic, whose name was Mathews, and who spoke in a high, cracked voice, "because Mrs. Tiplady *is* here. We have been faithful servants to you, Sir Henery, for nigh on thirty year, and our respects is due ; but these ongoin's we can't abide, and so we give notice."

“What is it? What does he mean, Mrs. Tiplady?” asked Sir Henry.

“This is what we mean, Sir Henery,” continued Mathews, in his screeching voice, but very deliberately. “We mean to give notice, we do. Mrs. Goodhart, gatekeeper and laundry-maid; Mrs. Bowles, housekeeper, cook, housemaid, kitchen and scullery-maid; and me, Mr. James Mathews, butler—upper and under—lacquey, footman, gardener, etc., gives notice, not because we have too much work, multifarious as are our offices, but because of things that have come to our knowledge.”

Here Mathews paused to note the effect of what he felt to be a weighty period.

“What does he want? What is it?” asked Sir Henry, already half-crazy with irritation and undefined fear.

“We have given notice, Sir Henery,” continued Mathews. “And now we come to our second portion.”

“Portion! What portion?” cried Sir Henry. “The prodigal’s portion——Ah!

Mrs. Tiplady, have you come about that again?"

"Mrs. Tiplady," said Mathews, advancing a step, and taking the word from that lady, "has nothing to say, I expect. We have the game in our hands, Sir Henery, and we mean to play it. The short and the long of it is this: We want hush-money. There; it's out. We're old and grey, and we may as well call things by their names. You understand us now. And it's not a bit of money in our hands that'll choke us off, mind. We have discussed the matter and settled it among ourselves. We have a goodish trifle saved each of us, and don't want no hundred pounds a-piece. We want annuities: Mrs. Goodhart, a hundred a year; Mrs. Bowles, a hundred and fifty; and me, two hundred; and we'll take nothing less. We know what you're hiding; and you know you must pay. We might ask a lot more, but we don't want to be hard on you."

"I'll give you—I'll—What shall I do, Mrs. Tiplady?"

“Send for the police,” said Mrs. Tiplady.

“No, no ; it would all come out then. I can’t have that.”

“What’ll all come out? What do they know?” said Mrs. Tiplady scornfully.

“Know!” cried Sir Henry. “They know it all. They have said so.”

“Know all what? Let them say what they know.”

Mrs. Tiplady rose and planted herself with arms akimbo beside Sir Henry. She usually attempted to play the fine lady on her visits to Garland Hall ; but now, as she meant to fight, she stood forward to give and take in her own proper character.

“Mathews,” she said, “what is it you think you know?”

“Tiplady,” said Mathews with a sneer, “I know enough to do for you.”

“I told you,” said Mrs. Tiplady, turning to Sir Henry. “They know just as little as there is to know, and that’s nothing.—Go away, you old fool,” she continued to Mathews. “You’re dotty, an’ you’re dreamin’.”

“ You think yourself very clever, don’t you ? ” said Mathews. “ You think nobody could possibly have found it out. But three can put three and three together. What do you come here for so often ? Why does somebody visit the ‘ Rose and Crown ’ ? and what’s the meaning of this ? ”

Here he took from his pocket a used order-book, and turning over the counterfoils read out, “ ‘ To Mrs. Tiplady, three hundred pounds,’ ‘ to Mrs. Tiplady, five hundred pounds,’ ‘ to Mrs. Tiplady, a thousand pounds.’ Do you think,” he continued, “ there’s a drawer in the house I don’t know the contents of ? Come, come ; you can’t brazen it out. We mean to be comfortable in our old age. We want our share. Last time you called, Tiplady, we laid our heads together and arranged this. Our minds are made up ; we’ll not go back a step, or bate a farthing.”

“ I’ll do it,” said Sir Henry. “ I’ll do it ; but you’ll not live long. Such cruelty,

such baseness!—God won't allow it to enjoy—He won't!”

“But what is it they know? Goodness an' mercy! Sir Henery, do nothing till they say what they know.”

“I couldn't—I wouldn't hear it. I would die if anybody said it. I have never said it myself.” Here he glanced with a shudder at the picture that hung with its face to the wall above the Hepplewhite table.

“Goodness an' mercy!” exclaimed Mrs. Tiplady, “I'll bet my life they know nothing: a pack of idiots as ought to be drowned in a cesspool.”

“Vile creature! vile creature!” said Mrs. Bowles, the housekeeper, speaking for the first time. “You're brazening of it out is a sure sign that it's true.”

“I told you,” said Mrs. Tiplady, turning in triumph to Sir Henry. “An' I'll take my solemn affidavy if I don't begin to guess what they think they have discovered. Oh my! Oh Lord!”

With that Mrs. Tiplady fell into a Sheraton chair and laughed till her sides were sore.

“We’ll see who laughs last,” said Mathews doggedly. “If you want your son to be master here, Tiplady, you’ll have to change your tune.”

“I knew it! I knew it!” cried Mrs. Tiplady, through the laughter that nearly suffocated her.

“What!” said Sir Henry, starting from his chair. “What do you say?”

“I say,” said Mathews, “that him you call Baptist Lake is your child but not your heir; and that Mrs. Tiplady is his mother.”

Sir Henry was too astonished at first to speak. At last he cried, “My God! if that were only true!”

Hardly had the words escaped him, when Baptist entered the room.

Mrs. Tiplady was the first to realise thoroughly who had come in. It was all over now, she knew. Her fast-and-loose

dealings with the money given her for Baptist would be exposed. What of it, though? The money had been drawn in her name; they couldn't make her disgorge. But there was nothing more to be made in Garland Hall. She would go. She had meant to beg money for the fine which would be imposed on Salerne for smuggling: that thought gave her a twinge. Still, she had enough and to spare. She would go.

"No, my dear Mrs. Tiplady," said Baptist as she crossed the room. "Not yet."

He locked the door and put the key in his pocket.

"I learned that trick at the 'Rose and Crown,'" he said with a smile.

"Ah! you are all here," he continued, moving slowly towards Sir Henry. "The mystery can be cleared up now."

"How dare you! how dare you!" said Sir Henry under his breath. Then he shouted, making a violent gesture, "Go away!"

“No, father,” said Baptist, the comedian strong in him, “I shall not leave this room until we come to an understanding. I have been and am extravagant, and have caused you pain. Forgive me. I am thirty now, father, and you are old. Let us be reconciled.”

Baptist held out his arms; but Sir Henry again, with a violent gesture and in a loud voice, called on him to keep away.

“Bid me to some penance if I am unworthy of your embrace; do not cut me off entirely. I have never known what it is to have a father.”

“Away! away!” cried Sir Henry.

“If it must be so,” said Baptist, mournfully, wiping the tears from his eyes. “But not before I know why I am kept from your presence.”

Having said that, he folded his arms and stood facing Sir Henry. They were within six feet of each other.

“Take him away,” said Sir Henry.

“Surely you four can take him away, big as he is.”

Baptist took a step nearer.

“Keep back!” cried Sir Henry frantically.

“I shall stand here till I know what I have come to know,” said Baptist.

Sir Henry sank into his chair, panting for breath. He rubbed his knees, clutched the chair-arms, and looked despairingly at the faces ranged around him, and at the reversed picture on the wall.

“Tell him,” he said at last, addressing Mrs. Tiplady. “Tell him, you; he has brought it on himself.”

“Turn the others out, then,” said Mrs. Tiplady. “There’s no need to give ourselves away.”

“No,” said Sir Henry, “let them stay. It has come. I knew it would, though I struggled against it. Let the whole world know.”

Mrs. Tiplady again offered to remonstrate; but Sir Henry, whose weak face had assumed a remarkable aspect of

strength—bright colour in the cheeks and strange fire in the eyes—gave her a look she was unable to disobey.

“Well, Master Baptist,” she said, really pleased with the importance of her part, but yet with wonderful diffidence for her, “you must know that your father in his young days was a bit of a lady-killer like yourself.”

“What do you mean?” asked Sir Henry.

“Beggin’ your pardon, sir, you must let me tell it my own way or not at all.”

“Go on, then,” said Sir Henry; “but don’t lie about me.”

“These three idiots,” said Mrs. Tiplady, somewhat ruffled, “thought that I was the lady. But it was another lady altogether. Your name is not Baptist Lake. Your good father——”

“Would God that were true!” said Sir Henry, rising to his feet again. “Are you mad, or dreaming, Mrs. Tiplady!”

“Tell it your own way, then,” said Mrs. Tiplady sulkily.

“You have never known it, not even you. *This* was what you meant by your hints and nods. Hear! You’ll all know it now.”

Stepping alertly on to the table he turned the picture face outwards.

“Ah! My mother,” said Baptist.

“Yes, sir; that is your mother and my wife,” said Sir Henry, returning to the floor. “I was twenty and she was eighteen when we were married. I loved her with all the strength and folly and aspiration of my youth; but she deceived me in the very first month of our marriage. Look at her. It is written in her face: luxury and lust. Her son is like her. But he is liker his father.”

Quickly unlocking a drawer in the Hepplewhite table, Sir Henry took from it a photograph and handed it to Mrs. Tip-lady.

“Oh,” said she, “Master Baptist! But he was never in the army.”

Baptist snatched the photograph from

her. It was very like what he had been at twenty—a young man in a French uniform.

He threw it from him. Mathews picked it up, and the three servants looked at it, turned it about, and made foolish exclamations.

“Did you know *that* was in one of my drawers?” asked Sir Henry.

“Yes, sir,” said Mathews; “but I thought it was Master Baptist.”

Sir Henry held out his hand for the photograph, and when it was returned to him he locked it in the drawer, saying, “That was your father, sir; the son of a Paris banker. We met him on our honeymoon. For five years after your birth I suffered the tortures of the damned, as I saw you growing liker and liker the French lieutenant. I schooled myself, and when your mother died would have taken you to my heart, but you would not let me love you. As a child you were elvish, a liar, and stole money wherever you could lay hands

on it. And you mocked at me. I sent you to school. Every year you grew worse ; before you were seventeen your debts were enormous. I sent you to Oxford. Your career there cost me twenty thousand pounds. The money was nothing ; but you lied and cheated, and ruined girls and men's wives. You were your father's and your mother's son. I came to hate you. The sight of you made me mad ; the very sound of your name—the sight of *it* made me tremble, made my heart stop. When you left college I tried to drive the misery out of my life. I bought you off, as I thought, with three thousand a year. You were never to come near me, your name I was never to hear, never to see. In a month you applied for more money through this good creature : Mrs. Tiplady, I should say before these what I have often said to yourself, that you have been a great consolation to me. I gave you the money then and often since through Mrs. Tiplady, and saved myself the hideous torment of

writing your name. It was your plan, Mrs. Tiplady, I have thanked you for it, and I thank you again.—But your name haunted me. I heard it bandied about in strange mouths—Baptist Lake. If men stopped speaking in my club when I came near, I knew what the subject had been. Your name haunted me in the papers—twice in the first year after you left college, ‘Mr. Baptist Lake, the son of Sir Henry Lake, of Pilgrimstow,’ co-respondent with some foolish actress. I gave up London, I ceased reading the newspapers; the long torture of my life had cowed and broken me. For five years I have not stirred beyond my own walls. Here, with books, or in my garden, I could sometimes forget. But you have come to me, you have forced your way to me—you, whose name is a byword for every iniquity that men commit, who are none of my flesh and blood—a bastard. You! you! you have no right to exist! You have no soul. How can God put souls into bastards? He can’t. He oughtn’t. I

loved your mother. I gave her all my love —all my true love, and she gave me you in return. Thirty years of hell on earth has been my punishment for marrying my first love. My friends tried to dissuade me, to laugh me out of it ; they told me no good ever came of calf-love marriages. I wouldn't listen to them ; I denounced them for snarling, worldly-wise fools. I was young and hot and loyal to my dreams, to my trust in men and women ; and I married my first love. It was but a little sin to be punished so dreadfully. And you stand calmly and listen, only slightly amazed. You have no soul. God daren't put souls into bastards. You don't exist ! I don't believe you exist. You are a phantom, a vampire ! How many men have you made as wretched as your father made me ? That a dream should do such wrong — a mere shadow ! Away ! Cease to appear ! It is there still, breathing, handsome, quiet, only a little amazed. What does it want here ? How came it here ? Who sent it here, a thing that

doesn't exist, to trouble the world so? Steel won't harm it."

Uttering a loud cry Sir Henry sprang forward, clutched Baptist's hair, and hacked at him with a dinner knife he had seized from the table. The two men fell, Baptist screaming with pain. Mrs. Tiplady and Mathews took Sir Henry by the shoulders, while Mrs. Bowles and Mrs. Goodhart with difficulty disengaged his hand from Baptist's hair. Sir Henry was motionless in their grasp; they tried to lift him up, but his body wouldn't bend. They then laid him on his back; and saw that he was dead.

Baptist lay moaning. In the struggle his left cheek had been laid open from the eye to the chin. Mrs. Tiplady put her hand in his pocket, and taking out the key of the door handed it to Mathews.

"The doctor for Sir Baptist Lake at once," she said. "Mrs. Bowles, prepare a room for your master. Mrs. Goodhart, you stay and help me to get Sir Baptist Lake to bed."

The three servants, after a moment's hesitation, obeyed her in silence ; and the last of the Lakes was left lying dead among the Sheraton and William III. chairs, with the Flemish buffet and the Elizabethan oak cupboard, full of silent memories of all the Lakes, overlooking them. The windows were open and the ivy leaves rustled softly, but the sad soul of Henry Lake was beyond their soothing now.

XVI.

AGNES's and Lizzie's babies were born in due course—large, fat, solemn, sleeping babies; and somewhat less than a year after that double event, Mrs. Inglis's eldest daughter, Mary, arrived at Lancaster Gardens also expecting a large, fat, solemn, sleeping baby. And again the event was to be double for Mrs. Inglis was in a delicate state too. Mary had brought with her her eldest boy, a little fellow of six, who plagued his grandmother all day long for stories, for one story in particular, the Story of Uncle Islay. It mattered not how many other stories Mrs. Inglis might tell at a sitting, she had always to finish up with the Story of Uncle Islay; so she tried telling it first. But the plan was not successful, for the little rascal always wanted other stories, and always the Story of Uncle Islay, his own uncle, whom he knew, to finish with.

And this was the Story of Uncle Islay as Mrs. Inglis told it to her grandson :—

“There was once a giant called Salerne, who had a beautiful daughter called Rose, and Uncle Islay fell in love with Rose and wanted to marry her. But the giant said that Uncle Islay couldn't marry his daughter unless he did something wrong; so Uncle Islay and giant Salerne went down to Belminster to do something wrong. And there they met another giant called Inglebeard, and went to his cave, and waited till it was dark. Then they rowed out in a boat and gathered out of the sea tobacco and brandy that had not been taxed. Some other people who were also in the power of these giants had dropped the tobacco and brandy from a steamer.

“Now there were two more giants who had to do with the thing, and their names were Slowse and Mawcap, and they had a cab ready when the other giants and Uncle Islay came ashore with the tobacco and brandy. But they didn't get away; because

the Queen had sent her officers to take them up. And they took up the three giants, Salerne, Slowse, and Mawcap; but Uncle Islay and giant Inglebeard escaped. Uncle Islay escaped to giant Inglebeard's cave, and giant Inglebeard escaped out into the sea, away away, into eternity. Now, although Uncle Islay escaped, he had done wrong, and he couldn't be happy until he had given himself up to the Queen's officers. And he was taken before the judge along with the three giants, Salerne, Slowse, and Mawcap. And the judge thought that Uncle Islay hadn't done very much wrong, and although a very stern officer of the Queen, called the Commissioner of Customs, caused a great deal to be said against Uncle Islay, the judge would not punish him; because the judge liked Uncle Islay for coming and giving himself up, and for being so fond of adventures. But the three giants were sentenced to pay very heavy fines. And as Mawcap and Slowse could get nobody to

pay their fines for them they were condemned to be imprisoned for a year. But Slowse was set free after a week, because it was he who had told the Queen's officers how to catch the giants. The year is not up yet, so Mawcap is still in prison.

“Grandpapa paid the fine for giant Salerne, because he liked him. Giant Salerne had a little money of his own, but he had given it to a very bad giantess called Mrs. Tiplady. They tried to take her up too, but they found none of the untaxed brandy in her shop: she was too clever for them. At first she said she would pay the fine for giant Salerne, and they would get married and go to America. But as soon as she saw that grandpapa was interested in giant Salerne she refused to pay it. And when grandpapa paid it she came to giant Salerne, and tried to show him how clever she had been in saving giant Salerne's money. But giant Salerne had changed his mind. He had become quite sure that Mrs. Tiplady had tried to make

his daughter do a very wicked thing ; so he wouldn't marry her, and Mrs. Tiplady went away to America alone. She was a very strange giantess ; I think she was also a witch and had sold her soul to the devil.

“Now giant Salerne was a very good sailor and wanted to go back to sea ; so grandpapa got him made captain of a four-masted, iron, clipper-built, sailing vessel ; and he sailed away to Calcutta, and will soon be home again, and he'll bring something from India for all grandmama's little boys and girls. For he is a very good giant, although he and Uncle Islay once did wrong.

“And Uncle Islay married the beautiful Rose, giant Salerne's daughter, and went away to Paris, and they lived happy ever after, learning to speak French.”

One forenoon while Mrs. Inglis for the hundredth time was telling her grandson the Story of Uncle Islay, Mr. Inglis came in from his morning walk, and when she had done he said : “Yes, and there's

another giant that once tried to make somebody else do wrong, and nearly succeeded, giant Baptist. I have just seen him. A voice hailed me suddenly from a hansom, and there was Baptist beckoning me. He asked me to go a little way with him, and I did so. He told me that he has been travelling since his father died, and returned to England only a fortnight ago. I couldn't keep my eyes from a long scar on his left cheek. 'Ah!' he said, 'I must tell you about that. The Marquise—but I had better not mention names. A lovely French Marquise and I were great friends for a week. Her husband, an Anglophobe of the bitterest type, had made only one stipulation when he married her, and that was that she should never be friends with an Englishman. He surprised us in the drawing-room of the Marquise's friend, bringing with him swords and seconds. He locked the door; Madame la Marquise, greatly excited, greatly delighted, had a chair placed on a table, and sat there to

witness the fight. The Marquis, a little black fellow, diabolically expert, cut me on the cheek at the very moment that I wounded him. The Marquise nursed us both, and the three of us have been great friends ever since. I am *l'Anglais unique*.' He put me down in Bond Street. He was going to a marriage, he said."

"Poor giant Baptist!" said Mrs. Inglis. "Do you believe his story?"

"Hardly."

"I should say that a certain widow must have had something to do with that scar."

"Perhaps."

"An attempt to spoil his beauty."

"Or to kill him."

The very morning after the meeting between Mr. Inglis and Sir Baptist Lake, there was a letter from Islay.

"They're coming home," said Inglis, after reading it. "Another grandchild, Mary. Imagine! Two nephews and an uncle all to be born together."

"Oh, my boy!" said Mrs. Inglis, catch-

ing her breath. "And Rose, too. Poor things!"

"You were speaking of a Sir Baptist Lake yesterday," said Mary, who had the newspaper.

"Yes."

"He was going to a marriage, wasn't he?"

"He was."

"Here's the marriage: '25th inst., by license, at St. George's, Hanover Square, by the Vicar, Sir Baptist Lake, of Garland Hall, Pilgrimstow, to Mrs. Alice Meldrum.'"

"By Jove!" said Inglis. "She has changed her mind then. When I saw her nine months ago she swore she would kill him."

"Perhaps this is the way she has taken to do it," said Mrs. Inglis.

"Or perhaps it's simpler than that," rejoined Mr. Inglis. "Finding his beauty spoiled, Baptist may have been glad to return to his early love."

THE END.

NOTE.

DURING the printing of this book I learned that the quotations on pp. 116-118, which were taken from an actual manuscript series of fourteen prayers written by an Ayrshire farmer between August 5th, 1693, and August 10th, 1710, form part of Richard Alleine's "Alarm to Unconverted Sinners." The prototype of the first John Inglis had evidently followed Alleine's "Author's Advice," which I copy from the "Alarm" of 1678.

• "This Covenant I advise you to make, not only in Heart, but in Word ; not only in Word but in Writing, before the Lord, as if you would present it to him as your Act and Deed. And when you have done this, set your hand to it, Keep it as a memorial of the Solemn Transactions that have passed between God and you, that you may have recourse to it in Doubts Temptations."

Alleine's books, "distinguished for their searching spiritual force," had a great vogue in his own time. The prayers quoted are so apt an expression of a certain phase of religious fervour, that they are still regularly used by the Methodists.

My thanks are due to Mr. E. J. Fitchett, who directed me to Alleine's works.

J. D.



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